Interview with Le Rowell

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Program
Foreign Service Spouse Series

LE ROWELL

Interviewed by: Hope MacBride Meyers

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Q: The interviewer wishes to acknowledge an addition to the interview, taped separately. It begins "How important is the role of the Foreign Service spouse?" and runs approximately one page, to the end of the interview. This portion was added at Mrs. Rowell's request after she had reviewed the typed manuscript.

This is Hope Meyers. I am about to record an interview with Le Rowell, wife of Edward M. Rowell, now Ambassador from the United States to Portugal (Since this interview was completed, Ambassador and Mrs. Rowell have been transferred to Luxembourg.). The interview is being taped at my apartment, in Washington, DC. The date is 6 June 1989.

ROWELL: I was born on June 25, 1935 in Washington, DC in the Columbia Hospital for Women. The home where I grew up was originally my grandparents' home built in 1919 just two blocks from the Washington National Cathedral in Cleveland Park. My mother lived in Georgetown for the first four years of her life and then moved with my grandparents to the house in Cleveland Park where she still lives today. After mother and daddy were married, daddy took on the responsibility of the house. My grandmother lived with us and I remember a happy, loving, family-oriented childhood.

My sister, brother and I attended John Eaton Elementary School, following in the footsteps of our mother and uncle. I graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School and then from Strayer College. I went to work as a legal secretary, took night school courses at George Washington and American Universities, and was very active in the life of our community church, the Cleveland Park Congregational Church.

Ed and I have three children. Ted is 30 and lives and works as a para-legal in Washington. Karen is 27, married and has a 4-month-old son, Daniel, born in February, 1989. Interesting to note here that Karen met her husband, Tim Schuler, in our home in Lisbon. In 1978 Ed was posted to Lisbon as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]. We had a policy of inviting all newcomers to the Embassy to our house for lunch in small groups. We wanted to get to know all the Embassy family. Tim had just arrived as a navy lieutenant, j.g., to take the job as business manager for the U.S. Navy at Alverca, a Portuguese air force installation. Karen had just arrived for the summer after her freshman year of college. They met at the newcomers lunch. So we got an added bonus when Karen and Tim married three years later.

All three children attended American schools overseas. Ed and I made a conscious decision that we wanted the children to have an American education. We felt they would pick up the local culture and language which they did through friends and our travels. And most American schools overseas are in fact international schools with the American curriculum. So they were exposed to more nationalities than just the local one. Karen had one year in kindergarten at a British school in Buenos Aires because the State Department did not pay for kindergarten in 1967, and the British school was good and less expensive than the American one.

Ted attended four different elementary schools in six years because of transfers and unusual circumstances. From Palo Alto, California, to Buenos Aires, Argentina, then to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, where we were direct transferred, and then a period in John

Eaton Elementary School (where I had gone) in Washington while we waited for events to cool down in Tegucigalpa so we could return.

Of the three children Chris had more of his schooling in the States. We spent one year at Stanford University [1970-71] followed by seven years in Washington before going to Lisbon the first time. After one year at the American International School in Lisbon we sent Chris to Northfield Mount Hermon in Massachusetts in 1978 for his last three years of high school. He needed advanced placement courses not offered in Lisbon at the time. This was not an easy decision for us, although Chris knew he needed more academic challenge and was ready to make the change. So with his brother at the University of California at Santa Barbara, his sister at Duke University and family in DC and Connecticut, he had a strong support network and we felt comfortable.

The way Ed and I met is a kind of all-American story. My church in Washington, Cleveland Park Congregational, was conducting a neighborhood canvass to find newcomers to the neighborhood and prospective church members. One of the choir members was part of the canvass group, and at a Thursday evening choir rehearsal he told me he had just met a new family who had two sons who would be good prospects for our young adult group. So I sent cards inviting them to the next social event which was a square dance and they both showed up, and that's where we met.

Q: You were both quite young.

ROWELL: He was 24. He had graduated from college.

Q: Where was that?

ROWELL: Yale University. He had just started his graduate work at the University of California in 1953 when he was drafted into the army. He went to Germany. He had taken his written exams for the Foreign Service and had passed them before being drafted. When he got out of the army he came back to Washington, DC, because that's where

his parents were at the time and he needed to take his oral exams. After he passed them there was a long wait for a security clearance and he worked at Woodward & Lothrop's as a salesman which he hated.

Q: Yes, I can imagine that would have been an awkward period. It is for many people.

ROWELL: He was then already headed towards a Foreign Service career when we met.

Q: And, in fact, he had his first posting, if I'm not mistaken, just before you were married.

ROWELL: Yes, he did, exactly. That's one of the reasons it took me a while to decide if I wanted to get married. Not that I didn't want to marry Ed, but was I going to be able to deal with Foreign Service life.

Q: What were your hesitations, do you think, as you look back on it?

ROWELL: I didn't know if I was going to be able to deal with Foreign Service life. I wanted to work. I was working and I was also in a transition period myself. I was working for a law firm and I had been offered a job with a Congressman on Capitol Hill. I was right in the process of trying to decide if I was going to take that job on Capitol Hill, or was I in fact going to marry Ed and go into the Foreign Service. Since he had told me all the negatives about the Foreign Service ...

Q: To prepare you?

ROWELL: To prepare me, I think, exactly. My expectations were low, instead of high, and I really wanted to marry Ed. He was the kind of person that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. So I made the decision knowing that I wasn't going to be able to work when I went into the Foreign Service. But I made that decision before I married Ed. I knew that I would have to give up any ideas of a career and devote my life to the Foreign Service, to our marriage, and to our children.

Q: Have you found that a satisfactory solution looking back on it so far? You have, it seems to me, more than almost anybody I know, managed to inject career, in a sense, into your Foreign Service life while you've been living very much the life of a wife and mother. So perhaps you've had the best of both.

ROWELL: I think I have. To me the Foreign Service has provided the opportunities for doing many of the things that I couldn't do back here in Washington, but I could do overseas. I could initiate programs, I could bring groups of people together. It's been a unique opportunity for me, and I've occasionally had opportunities to do contract work. I did one job in Central America; then, coming back to Washington, with the Overseas Briefing Center. But I think it's been a plus. There's no question about it. It's offered me opportunities, and I happen to have what I think are ideal qualities for Foreign Service life which are portable careers and portable talents.

Q: I'd like to ask you right now, then, a question: What do you think are the qualifications for a successful Foreign Service wife? You say, "I brought certain qualities and qualifications to the job." As you look back on the wives you have known, do you have any thoughts now about those wives whom you regard as being particularly successful as individuals and as representatives of the United States, and perhaps by contrast those who were less successful?

ROWELL: I think for myself and perhaps those who feel they have been successful, and have enjoyed what they've done, I think they are the kinds of people who initially made a conscious decision about what they were doing. They are self-confident and have a sense of adventure and discovery. I didn't just say, "Oh, I think I'll try this out." I thought about it for over a year, and I made a decision that, first of all, I was going to make my marriage work; and that I was going to try to carve a place for myself because I knew that I was going to be the one making the sacrifices, not my husband. That was the role that I chose to play.

We communicate a lot. I have to say that I have an enormously supportive husband. If I want to do something, he supports me enormously. One point I said to him, I said, “What if I wasn't here? How much would it cost you to replace me?” He said, “First of all, I couldn't, but if you're talking realistically about the representation and just the role of being a hostess, organizing events, managing the administrative work at the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) residence, being a representative of the U.S.” This was back when we first went to Portugal actually, 1978-79. And at a minimum, just the services that I provided, he guessed $30,000 a year, which I thought was interesting.

Q: Do you think there are certain skills? You said, “I had portable skills that lent themselves to amplifying,” if you want to put it that way, “my life in the Foreign Service.”

ROWELL: In general, yes. I think those people who have professions as teachers, artists, nurses, the arts, have portable skills. I guess my basic skill is in management and organization, which is really where I started in business school. Those skills have provided me opportunities to put together programs, to bring people together, to initiate ideas. As I said before, I probably couldn't do that here in the United States as well as I could overseas, and it's provided the tools that I needed to build bridges. And I can't leave out the people skill, the ability to work with people of different cultures, backgrounds and social classes.

Q: I noted that in your biographical information you list as your professions “writer and lecturer.” You certainly have done a lot of both, but management doesn't necessarily apply to writer and lecturer. How did you happen to begin those, and continue those avenues?

ROWELL: Part of the organization, or management, element is putting together programs. Specifically I started some years ago at the Foreign Service Institute doing the lectures on representation overseas. I wrote and put the course material together. And again it's a question of organizing your materials, and then presenting the materials. I continue to do

the same thing in lecturing. I've given the same representational workshops overseas at our posts. I have also done lecturing on American quilts.

Q: Yes, that interested me particularly. I want to talk about that in another context.

ROWELL: The writing has always been there. I always seem to be either writing up something - - for representational records for the embassy, or the big project that I did which was the cross-cultural paper on Portugal for the Overseas Briefing Center at the Foreign Service Institute.

Q: How did that come about? Because I wasn't aware that there was that kind of material prepared at post for the OBC. Was that as a result of your initiation?

ROWELL: No, no, the Overseas Briefing Center initiated this, and it's an excellent program, absolutely a super program. Eventually they will have cross-cultural papers for every post where we have a mission overseas. When I first went to Lisbon — coming from seven years in Washington where I was very active in the Kennedy Center and at the Foreign Service Institute — I was trying to pull things together there; help morale, get programs going. I didn't really have anything that I could put my teeth into. When I came back to Washington, I talked with Jean German who was then the coordinator of the Overseas Briefing Center. She and I were very good friends. We had worked together on many projects. Jean said to me, “I want you to do something for me. I want you to write the cross-cultural paper on Portugal." I said, “Oh, Jean, come on, that's a big job.” And, in fact, it was a big job. It was kind of doing a small dissertation for a college course, in a way. But it was fun and I enjoyed doing it.

The interesting thing was, I did it a year after I had arrived in Lisbon. I could not write that paper now in the same way, because after I'd been there more than a year I felt my perspective had changed. My foreignness was fading. I was at the perfect stage on arrival. I could make objective observations — not just intuitive things that I felt. Because after a while you become part of where you are, and you lose the perspective of what are

problems for other people. I was going through many of those problems at that time. I have since updated the paper after a five year absence, now that I'm back again in Portugal. I have updated just a few things because there have been sociological changes in the country from the time of the revolution until now.

Q: We've been speaking about things that you've done for OBC, for example, and FSI. When you began as a very junior Foreign Service wife, what was the nature of the training that you got, if any, at FSI before you went to Recife?

ROWELL: Terrifying.

Q: That was about 1956, or so.

ROWELL: We were married in '57 and left almost immediately after that. We were here four months, because I was still working, and interestingly enough, I was earning more money than Ed when we married — just to show you how times have changed. The only course that I was able to take was the representational-protocol course.

Q: Who gave that then? Do you remember?

ROWELL: I don't remember.

Q: That was before Mary Vance Trent took over the running of the wives course.

ROWELL: Yes, it was. That's right.

Q: There was a woman who did do some of that named Regina Blake. I don't know whether she was in any way in charge of the training at that time.

ROWELL: At that point I was in a blur. The course was well intentioned, and you have to remember the times. We're talking about a very traditional Foreign Service, we're talking about a very traditional American culture at the time where ladies wore hats and

white gloves, and stockings and the whole bit, as we used to say. Our first assignment was in the northeast of Brazil, Recife, the tropics. After having finished this course at the Overseas Briefing Center, I had everything in place. I had all my calling cards, and I had my pencil to write in the correct corner, and I thought I had everything all together. I understood protocol!When we arrived in the northeast of Brazil, which is in the tropics, we arrived by ship — on a freighter. As we approached the dock I could see the consul and his wife and a few other people in the consulate standing on the pier waiting for us. And, to my horror, I realized that we were not going to pull up to the dock, that the tide was out, and that we were going to have to climb down a rope ladder into a boat. So I stood there on the deck, with my hat on, and my white gloves, and my stockings, and I thought, “Oh, my God, this is just not possible. What am I going to do?” I thought to myself for a second. I had one of those very small hats with a veil — completely inappropriate for the northeast of Brazil and the tropics — I took off my hat and my gloves, and I shoved my hat and my gloves in my husband's pockets of his coat, and I took my stockings off and I shoved them in my purse, and I climbed down the rope ladder into the boat and was greeted with open arms.

Q: Probably with cheers if they had been able to see you.

ROWELL: For me it was a real eye opener. At that moment I realized that no matter what protocol calls for, common sense is your best guide. Then I also learned, after a number of years of dealing with protocol, that protocol has a good reason to be there. It's very useful, and it is, for the most part, common sense, and people shouldn't be terrified of it. I learned that very quickly, and so in the courses that I give, that's my approach to it. Not to be terrorized by it like I was, and if you forget to turn down the corner of the card, nobody cares, or certainly there would be no serious consequences.

Q: When you arrived in Recife what kind of a post did you find? It was a consular post, of course. How big was it? What was the American, or non-Brazilian population of the city,

which I know is a fairly large one? What kind of activities did you find yourself either caught up in, or needing to create for yourself when you were first there at your first post?

ROWELL: It was a very small post when we were there. It has since grown to be a consulate general. Now I think it's back to being a consulate, but because of the AID presence now it's very big. It was very small when we were there. There was a consul and a vice consul, there was a USIS representative, AID, but small, but very, very small. We were there a year-and-a-half. For me it was a tremendous adjustment. It was so different from Washington, DC, and from the culture and place where I had lived. The American or non-Brazilian population was comfortable as a community. American business and military were represented, along with British and Dutch residents. There were also missionaries. One in particular stands out. Gertrude Mason was one of the passengers on the freighter that took us to Recife. She was a rather stern lady. We had talked a number of times on deck where I usually sat in my Bermuda shorts writing thank-you notes for our wedding gifts. Shortly before we landed she told me that I could never wear those shorts in Recife. It turns out she was quite correct. I wore the shorts only at home. Ladies wore skirts. One of the first people to visit me after our son, Ted, was born was Gertrude Mason.

Q: Did you speak any Portuguese when you went there? And if you didn't, how did you learn?

ROWELL: No, I did not speak Portuguese. I learned it the hard way. The reason I did not is that there was not enough time between our marriage and the few months later when we left for Recife and also I was not allowed to take language at all at the Foreign Service Institute. So Ed, my husband, permanently borrowed the language books from the Foreign Service Institute and carried them with him. I literally walked around the city of Recife with the lessons in my hand. I remember going to the doctor when I was pregnant with Ted, our first child. He spoke only in Portuguese and had to write instructions down on paper in Portuguese which I took home and got Ed to translate for me. Although I had taken French in school, I had no background really at all for the language, and no training, and

no opportunities. It was self taught then. It was the first post, adapting to marriage, to the Foreign Service, to this rather remote place.

I also remember my helpless feeling shortly after our arrival on the ship. We were taken to the home of the vice consul Ed was replacing. We had lunch. Ed and the vice consul left for the office and I went upstairs to unpack and rest. As I was unpacking I heard someone clapping. I looked out the back window and saw the maid in her room. The clapping continued so I opened one of the shutters at the front of the house and looked out. Three Indians stood at the front gate and when they saw me they started dancing and chanting. I slammed the shutters shut and jumped in bed. The clapping continued and I just stayed in bed in shock. That evening when the men came home and they described their day of Ed being introduced to his colleagues in the consulate, I knew what the next question was going to be, “And how was your day, Le?” I debated whether to relate my afternoon and finally decided I would. The vice consul laughed and explained to me that all they wanted was a contribution for their carnival costumes. I frankly did not see the humor then. No one had left me any money and further I couldn't have spoken a word of the language anyway to find out what they wanted even if I had had the courage to go to the gate. I really thought this was a bad cowboy movie. I'd never been to a place like this before. It was a sink or swim feeling.

Q: Could you describe it?

ROWELL: Yes. We had a very small house on a dirt road. The walls were painted in alternating pink and blue with red shutters. There were holes in the wall going up to the second floor for air circulation and for bugs to enter as well. There was no air conditioning. After a while I got used to the green bugs and mosquitoes but not before a funny incident. One night I woke up from a sound sleep to find my husband flashing a flash light around our bedroom. I asked him what in the world he was doing. He said that he was looking for the green bugs on the walls because I had asked him to. I have been known for talking in

my sleep so I guess the bugs had affected me more than I realized. We used a fan at night to keep the bugs away and I put mosquito netting over Ted's bassinet.

The water rarely reached the second floor. I would wash my hair on the lawn most of the time because we had no water pressure. We had buckets beside the toilet with instructions on how to flush a toilet with one throw of the bucket. I had to make practically all the food including mayonnaise. All the products I was familiar with did not come in convenient jars. Shopping was done at a central market. Martha Horton, wife of the USIS officer, introduced me to the ins and outs of marketing. It took a whole morning to shop, unload groceries, clean the fruits and vegetables, and store the food properly.

Our first child was born there and I was fortunate not to have had any complications. The Brazilian military doctor who was to deliver the baby was put under house arrest shortly before Ted was due. The doctor was part of a group of military officers who had criticized the president, Juscelino Kubitschek. So I had no idea who was going to deliver my child. When I went into labor Ed drove me to the open air hospital which had been built by the U.S. Army Air Corps in World War II. The hospital reminded me of the ones you see in the movies about tropical islands. Well, Recife was in the tropics just seven or eight degrees south of the Equator. I was in labor for sixteen hours and attended by a midwife who I knew could deliver if necessary. Just hours before I delivered, the doctor arrived having been released from house arrest. Ed stayed with me the whole time and wrote one of his better speeches to be presented at a local university conference on democracy in anticipation of upcoming elections. I made all the baby food, literally, in a Waring blender, which we still have today. It was difficult for us to get things, but they would not send anything up from the embassy for us. So a military couple, a sergeant who lived next door, would bring in the baby's milk (evaporated milk) on their order that the Air Force flew in from the United States. And I fed Ted bananas which I remember at that time was not recommended in America for babies. But it is what was available where I was living.

Q: Were conditions reasonably sanitary? For example, was the water drinkable? Did you have to boil that?

ROWELL: No. The water was not drinkable. We had to filter and boil water every day. Even to make ice cubes we used purified water and this is where some people slip up. Every vegetable, fruit, whatever was eaten, had to be cleaned with little halazon tablets, or Clorox if you didn't have the halazon tablets. And like all markets in places like that, you go and buy the meat, whatever it is, bring it home, and if the chicken is alive, you kill it and clean it and cut it up. The maid killed the chicken. I could not bring myself to do that. I remember, going home after four years of being in Brazil and never going home during those four years, people would say to me, “Oh, but you're so lucky, you had a maid.” I was irate, absolutely irate. I said, “Have you ever cleaned a kilo of rice or a kilo of beans?” And they'd look at me like, “What do you mean, clean it?” I said, “Yes, it comes with stones, and rocks, and dirt in it, and you have to clean it.” I said, “Have you ever killed a chicken?” And that stopped them when they understood that we had to have a maid just to prepare the food that we needed daily. So it was not a luxury, and it was also a security. If you didn't have a maid in your house, the chances of being robbed were terrific. We had our laundry taken. The maid put it out on the lawn to dry, which is what they did, including the baby's diapers. Somebody would come along and take it. It was primitive. Even the flowers, which I think were some kind of lily, that grew above the wall around our house were eaten by the cows that were herded by our house each evening. One evening I had planned to use the flowers for a table decoration and had to create an arrangement of fresh fruit instead. We had no telephone. So all parties or anything you wanted to do, you really had to plan ahead, and very often I had to get in the car and drive around and drop invitations off, or send them to the office with my husband so he could give them to certain people to deliver. We were really isolated.

Q: I can understand that you must have felt very far from Washington, DC. Were there other Americans, other than the diplomatic personnel?

ROWELL: Yes, there were a few. Bank people and private business people who became very, very good friends. One of the things I did there (because again, I was looking for some place where I could make a contribution, and I could make a difference) I thought, “I can teach English.” I had made friends with a Brazilian neighbor, Dionea Meindardt. Her husband owned a jewelry store in downtown Recife. So Dionea became my language mentor and introduced me to the YWCA. I became active in the YWCA there, and I taught English. As it turned out, one of my pupils, Maria Madalena, was the wife of Gilberto Freyre, the well-known sociologist in Brazil at the time. Gilberto died in July 1987. Also the wife of one of the leading artists, Lulu Cardoso Ayres, was a pupil and that was for me an entree into their society. Dionea became a very good friend. It was she who warned me about giving to every poor person who came to our front gate. She told me to stop or I would have a constant stream of beggars. It did go against my charitable instincts, but she was correct. They did stop coming by regularly.

It was also Dionea who suggested that I come sit down with the ladies at a cocktail party and not stand up talking with the men. There was a real division of the sexes at parties. After dinner the ladies would go off to a separate room while the men chatted and smoked.

We had a group of young Americans that would get together on weekends and barbecue. One weekend the men decided they would go out and catch a young pig and we would roast it on the beach. They brought the pig back to our house, skinned and cleaned it. They asked me how long to cook it on the beach buried with charcoal. So I got out my trusty Joy of Cooking book and figured so many pounds at 350 degrees. We had a good time playing games on the beach while the pig was cooking. When the time came to dig it up what a shock we had. It was mostly charcoaled pig. No one bothered to tell me the temperature was probably closer to seven hundred degrees. We did have a good laugh and I learned a big lesson.

Q: What was your, and Ed's of course, relationship to the Embassy in Rio? Did you have any contact with the larger American presence in Brazil? Or were you very much on your own, both in Recife, and then in your later post afterwards?

ROWELL: From my viewpoint, we had no contact with the embassy at all. They wouldn't even send up supplies for us. We would have visits from the consul general, Bill Affeld, who was very supportive when he came up. But for the most part, I felt we were on our own. We had a very good consul and his wife, the Whitakers, who were very supportive of us, and they knew it was our first post, although they had their problems too. Her mother was living there, and actually was very ill and frail. So they were caught up in their own personal problems, too.

The other thing that struck me about that post, and also in Curitiba where we went directly from Recife, was the isolation of agencies. People would be talking and planning something, and they would say, “Oh, they're with AID,” or “They're with USIS.” It always struck me as being slightly absurd. So I asked Ed, because this was all new to me, and I said, “Why do people keep saying that? So what, that they're with AID?” He said, “Well, agencies have their turf, and they like to protect their turf, so to speak.” I understand that, but we both, from the very beginning, made a conscious effort to build our relationships with all the other agencies at the consulates and embassies where we served.

When we went to Curitiba, there were a couple of instances. And it was difficult for me in Curitiba because Ed was then the principal officer, the consul, and I was 24 years old. I had one baby, a small baby six months old, and here I was the wife of a principal officer. The wife of the USIS officer at that time was certainly old enough to be almost my grandmother. This was their last post before retirement. They were very nice people. I think she felt a little put off that Ed and I were so young and the principal officer. They had been there, and they were kind of the leaders in the local community and in our small consulate. I had to be very careful about how I handled them, and how I handled the AID people because they were a much larger contingent. There were only three people

from State; a communicator, a vice consul, and Ed and myself. That was it. Then we had USIS and AID. The vice consul was a young man from New York City. This was his first overseas post. A few months after his arrival, Ed asked me if I would teach George how to drive his car which had just arrived. You can imagine my surprise. Yet when I thought about it, of course, living in New York City you would have little opportunity to drive, which was his case. So I taught George how to drive his car.

Q: That, by the way, is reasonably characteristic of many posts no matter what the size, is it not?

ROWELL: Yes, yes it is.

Q: A State/Foreign Service (narrowly defined) representation and much larger contingents from other groups.

ROWELL: Yes. I think, and I still do and I haven't changed my mind about this at all, but I made a very big effort, and Ed did too, that we included them all in our official representation. It didn't matter that when we were included in theirs, that they would put the USIS wife to the right, and they'd put me to the left even though I was the wife of the consul. I just said, “I don't care. If it's their way of getting a message across, that's fine. But that's not going to change us.” Because we have found over the years that when we all work together in a mission, you get much better results. And let's face it, we're all working for the same government. It's not as if we had a military government, and a cultural government, and an AID, and then the State Department. No. And as you say, now we've more and more agencies overseas, and some of them, as in Bolivia, are larger than the State Department. I think people in the State Department need to recognize this and try to make things work.

Q: What were the circumstances surrounding your evacuation from Curitiba? How long did that absence last?

ROWELL: In 1961 Janio Quadros, the president, resigned and fled the country. The three southern states, two of which were in Ed's consular district, Santa Catarina and Parana, were under military rule. We were overdue to leave the country. I, at that time, was within seven weeks of having our second child. I had been to a doctor there but we knew we were not going to have the baby there. So I had to leave and Ed could not get any kind of a military plane. Nobody would stop in those three southern states to pick anyone up. So he got permission from the embassy to drive me through the military lines, and leave me in Sao Paulo, and then he had to go back and stay at the post. I didn't know when he was going to get back to the States. I knew he would get back, but I just didn't know when. Our son at that time was just short of three. This was October 1961.

So Ed, in the consular car, drove us through the military lines. We kept getting stopped periodically once we crossed over into the state of Sao Paulo, and Ed would be asked to get out of the car and go over and talk to the commanding general who wanted to know what was going on in Parana, or what was going on here, and then we'd get to another point and he'd say, “Now further up the road the road is mined, so follow the detour signs.” We'd go on the paved road and then we'd go off down on the dirt, and come back up on the other side. In a way it was almost like playing at war but it was serious. I mean, it's not something that I would dare laugh at, and I did not laugh at then. Now it seems a little more entertaining than it was at the time but frankly, I was traumatized.

We got to Sao Paulo. Ed left me at the airport. I got on the plane with our youngest son, flew to Rio. I was met at the plane with an Embassy car. The Brazilian driver dropped me in a hotel and said he'd be back the next morning to pick me up. I didn't sleep all night because I was afraid nobody would wake me up, and I was trying to take care of Ted at the same time. The next morning the car was there. The driver came and he said, “Take these papers.” And as I recall there was not an officer, it was the driver only. There was no person, or another wife, that came and helped me. I got in the car and I remember him saying, “Don't lose these papers. This one is very important.” I said, “What is it?” He said,

“It's a court injunction for you to leave the country with your son.” Ted had been born at a consulate so he did not have diplomatic immunity, and the Brazilians considered him a Brazilian. No Brazilian woman could leave the country with her male child without her husband's permission. I did not have my husband's written permission in the sense that a Brazilian would have to have it. So the Embassy had a court injunction saying it was legal for me to leave the country with our son.

The driver dropped me at the airport...

Q: You were left to cope with this by yourself with the authorities?

ROWELL: With this child, and I was blessed because he was a very good boy and I could say to him, “Ted, you sit right there. I'm going over to the counter.” He sat there with all the suitcases around him. I went to the counter, gave them my ticket, did everything, went back, and little did I realize it, I was within six weeks of having our second child, and flew back to the United States. Happily I have my parents here in Washington so I was able to come back to a stable environment. But it's interesting what you do when you have to do it without the support system that exists now. You just do it.

Q: I had not realized until now that there had been that set of circumstances that would force anyone to leave at that particular time.

ROWELL: For me it was more my individual circumstances, because we were very long overdue to leave Brazil and go to another post. We should have left but because things were getting progressively worse in Brazil they wouldn't allow Ed to go.

Q: What happened to him?

ROWELL: He stayed on and came just a few days before Karen was born. By then the coup was over, and things were beginning to settle down again.

Q: When I was thinking about this interview the place where my attention was focused was Bolivia. Did you have some of the same feelings about living in La Paz that many people may have about living in other areas, where circumstances might develop, surprisingly, in terms of ability to cope with the situation? In other words, did you find that living in a country that is supposed to be not the safest, was in fact not as difficult as one might picture it to be?

ROWELL: Yes. Let me answer that, but also let's go to Honduras because Honduras follows what more or less happened in Brazil. Maybe I should do Honduras first, and then go to Bolivia?

Q: Fine.

ROWELL: Okay, because we went from Buenos Aires, Argentina, to Honduras in 1968, and it was a direct transfer. They cut short our tour in Buenos Aires. When we arrived in Honduras it was my first real experience with anti-American feeling. I found it a bit difficult to deal with initially. There were a lot of things that I was dealing with. First, leaving Buenos Aires before our tour was finished. I was president of the Embassy Women's Association which focused on introducing the wives to Argentine artists, composers, architects, historians, etc. I was also co- authoring with Jo Yelton an orientation guide to Buenos Aires for newcomers, as well as an “Entertaining Ideas” book. Both were eventually published. I was reaching my plateau of “job satisfaction” and wanted to finish my work. As I look back I realize that whenever I've found a solid niche, we are transferred. The anti-American feeling and the fact that I didn't want to be there (in Honduras) had an effect on our children. They became negative in their attitudes. They were small still, but, “Mommy, I don't like this. I don't want to do that,” kind of thing. And then I realized I was the one that was projecting this onto the children, so I kind of got my act together. And once I got there and got settled, and got into some of my projects, things began to level off a bit.

But then problems were developing, as they had been over the years, were getting much worse between El Salvador and Honduras. They had a war in 1969, the famous Soccer War. As it turned out, the children and I were on home leave and Ed was recalled back to Honduras, so he spent his whole home leave in Honduras while the children and I were here in Washington with my mother. When we went back to Honduras after the war was over, the anti-American feeling was incredible. The Hondurans felt that we, the Americans, had not supported them. We hadn't sent airplanes, and guns, and ammunition, and what they needed to win this war with El Salvador.

The security there was difficult. It was the first time that I had been involved in having people follow me in cars, having our house watched. I had been teaching in a nursery school that was training young women from the rural areas of Honduras. They were learning to be teachers' aides. I taught arts and crafts and how to read to children. I was allowed to continue my teaching even though the security people at the embassy were not happy. I assured them I would be okay because the woman in the market place from whom I bought fruits and vegetables had told me that she would hide me under her table if there was any trouble. Her young child was in the nursery school above the market. On my way home one day from teaching, I glanced in my rear view mirror and saw two men in a car behind me. They stayed behind me for a number of blocks so I decided not to go home but to turn in a different direction to see if they were really following me. They were so I drove to a friend's house, rushed to the door, banged on it and the maid came. My friend, whose husband worked for the Italian Embassy, was not at home but I explained to her maid what the problem was, called our embassy and described the car which had pulled up behind mine outside. As I was finishing the conversation the car pulled away and disappeared. In retrospect I should have driven right to the American Embassy.

Our youngest son, Chris, was in a nursery school which two friends and I had set up. Ted was in the fifth grade and Karen in the second grade at the American School. Some of the students expressed anti-American sentiments, which I interpreted as not necessarily their

own but what they had heard at home. The children could not go out by themselves at all, and that included playing in our yard. They had to go in groups with a parent. Our son, for example, couldn't even walk across the street to a little store to buy candy and come back. I had to go with him. That developed into a situation that I certainly had never anticipated when we were transferred there.

Q: What were your living conditions there? Were you in a compound? Were you in a separate house? Were other people in separate houses?

ROWELL: Yes. Everybody was in separate houses, and spread all over town, which made it difficult for protection of Americans. We had one American family that actually had a bomb fall in their yard. They lived right near the airport and the bomb missed the runway and part of it was in the yard. That developed into a situation that was unpleasant. As we all know, it has gone from bad to worse over a long period of time.

In Bolivia... our expectations in Bolivia were so low that nothing — I mean, anything good would have been an upper. It was a sad experience for me. When your husband is first appointed to be an ambassador some place it's a nice feeling. You feel like you've accomplished something and we together felt that we had accomplished something. But other people's reactions to Ed's appointment were just devastating. They'd say, “Oh, gee, I hear you're going to Bolivia. Gosh, what a shame.” It's like we were going to death. People were giving us condolences instead of saying, “That's terrific. We are so pleased for you.” They didn't think about Ed at all. They just thought about, “Oh, God, he's going to Bolivia.” Needless to say, we went with fear, and I in particular, went with fear and trepidation, not knowing what to expect — except the worst.

The drug scene, the threats, the altitude, it's all there. I had this horrible picture of myself getting off the airplane and fainting and falling down the stairs, or something to that effect. Well, that never happened.

As it turned out, yes, there were problems. When we first arrived in August 1985 it was still the aftermath of changes of government and the installation of Victor Paz Estenssoro as a democratically elected president. There were shortages of food, there were minor strikes, marches in front of the embassy, and throwing sticks of dynamite. Security was very tight. Ed had not only a personal guard that always rode in the car with him, but a follow car filled with guards too.

Q: What about you?

ROWELL: When we first arrived I had a guard, but as the new president took over, and things began to level off, and it looked like this democracy in fact was going to work, things began to settle down. Settle down mainly for me. Ed always had the follow car. I talked with the regional security officer, and told him what I would like to do. I would like to walk to the embassy for my language classes, and he said, “Yes, you do that but you know you don't follow the same patterns.” I said, “I'm quite aware of all the security precautions I need to take.” So, in fact, I could walk. I could not drive a car. We did not have a personal car. They preferred that I not have a personal car and drive around. I would be an easy target.

I sometimes think the way security works, though, that it makes the ambassador an even larger target. Everywhere we went it was like Hollywood opening night. I mean, the follow car gets there, the guards jump out, they're running around. Then Ed gets out, and if I'm with him I get out, and there's this big fanfare and everybody has to turn around and look because this is not your everyday happening. So I have mixed feelings. I mean, I do understand why they have to have it, but on the other hand I think it draws a lot of attention. I felt safer by myself, walking on the streets. I watched for groups of men, or people sitting in cars, or the same car, that kind of thing. I was aware of it and I felt quite safe. But I'm not silly enough to think that it can't happen to me, because I know it can. It's not me, it's just what I represent.

Q: Your children, you said, in Honduras were rather affected by both the circumstances and possibly your own personal response to the circumstances. Were they with you in Bolivia?

ROWELL: No. That was 1985 to 1988. They were all in college and working by that time. No, they were with us just in Honduras.

Q: Again, I would like to know a little bit about life in La Paz under these circumstances. Were you able as members of the diplomatic corps, in addition to being representatives of the United States, to have a reasonable social life, meet other nationalities posted there, and, of course, Bolivians? How did you accomplish that? Had your predecessors helped in introducing you when you arrived there as Ambassador and his wife?

ROWELL: No. They had already departed, so when we arrived, we arrived on our own, and began to meet people on our own. Of course, there are lists that have been left, guest lists, etc. That's where the representation comes in, because we feel it's an important part of living overseas; inviting people from different walks of life, the diplomatic corps, from the political, from the economic, from the cultural, the academic life, to the residence, and mixing these people together and meeting them. That's precisely what we did. However, the first thing that we did, and we're getting back to protocol again, is, we made our calls on all the ambassadors that ranked above us. We found that to be an enormous plus. People welcomed us with open arms. If an American ambassador and his wife do not make those courtesy calls, people talk about it. We heard about ambassadors that had not done that and it's worth the time, and the effort, to call. Even though it's a lot of calls — not as many there as in Portugal, but never mind, we did it. The diplomatic corps were grateful. They felt that we respected them, to take the time to make the courtesy calls. That was, for us, an opening door into the diplomatic corps. Then, of course, the calls on the president. I called on the president's wife, and I called on some of the wives of ministers, the foreign minister. We built up some very good relationships and friendships.

Q: I can certainly see that that would be a marvelous way to begin. Had you ever been to Bolivia before?

ROWELL: Never, no. That was the first time. The other wives in the community there, I think, dealt very well with living under these circumstances. We had periodic security briefings, and orientations. It's not easy to get people to come to the orientations, but Ed wrote a personal letter and said that he and I were looking forward to having them at the orientation, and talking with them afterwards and having coffee. We had a good turnout for the orientations, and part of the orientation, of course, is the security briefing. It was done in a factual way so as not to panic people. We practiced using the radios. It was interesting, at one of those sessions the communicator was showing the radio and how it operated, and he said, “Who would like to try this radio?” Well, I knew how difficult it was and the first time nobody wants to get up there and feel like you don't know how. So I said, “I'll do it.” Once I got up there, and they could see that I was having trouble, they all volunteered to follow along. That's part of it, it's the fear of the unknown, of not knowing how to use that radio. The morale was good.

Q: Did you ever have to use it?

ROWELL: No, not for an emergency but I did use it. Once a month I would call in... no, I take that back. A couple of times I did when the telephones went out because I was out of touch with the embassy and I could only call through the radio. That also happened in Portugal.

Q: You said, I think, that you and Ed initiated an orientation. Was there one before? Did I misunderstand what you said? There had been orientations?

ROWELL: Yes, I'm sure they'd had them before. Planning the orientation at embassies is a tricky thing. At each post they're always trying to figure out the best way to get the majority of the people to those orientations, especially those who really need to come. Offering

rides, offering food, having a potluck supper afterwards, or whatever. The attendance had not been good at the orientations, so we were trying to figure out how to do it, and the personal letter from Ed, which some people would say was a command performance. But it was a kind command performance, “We want you to come. This will be helpful to you, and Le and I are looking forward to seeing you there.” Meaning we want you and your spouse, we want the family to come. We had a tremendous turnout.

Q: How big was the embassy? Again, Foreign Service and other components?

ROWELL: There were probably 300. It's huge because of the drug problem. You have DEA, NAU (Narcotics Advisory Unit), a huge AID mission. Again, many more people in other agencies than in State. In fact, if you counted all the contractors and security support people, there were over 600 people at the embassy.

Q: Did people in DEA, and AID, and other supportive agencies in terms of the American interest there... were they there with their wives, or were they there as single individuals?

ROWELL: Both. Those who were married had their wives there. That was difficult, especially in the other cities, in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, where the spouses — they had some threats, things were difficult for them because the drug problem there is very, very serious. Every time Ed and I would go to Cochabamba or Santa Cruz on an official trip, for example, we would always make a point to have a breakfast or a lunch or some kind of a meeting with the DEA and other American embassy people who might be there.

Q: How often did you do that?

ROWELL: We did it fairly often.

Q: Consciously you planned...

ROWELL: Absolutely — to keep in touch with these people, and to keep in touch, for Ed, for representation, to keep in touch with the mayor, and the governor, and the bishop, and the president of the university and things like that. No, we traveled.

Q: Despite the difficult circumstances there, that was...

ROWELL: Security was very tight. The advance team would have to go out, and at the time the defense attach# office had the C-12 — had use of a C-12 airplane — so we flew on that airplane. Only once did we go on the regular airline, so we had the use of the airplane to make these trips.

Q: I know that while you were in Bolivia you encouraged, among many other things that you did, the development of certain artistic talents of Bolivian women. Did you, yourself, do designing for them for the products that they prepared for you to bring, for example, to Washington where you had, I think, a sale where you sold some of these beautiful objects?

ROWELL: Oh, yes. That was Daisy Wende's thing. The designs, no, I did not do the designs. They were done by local people, Bolivians. AID had an interesting project where they took groups of women and created co-ops, and they knitted sweaters. Those designs were brought in for the women to do, because we're talking about marketing in the United States, which is something where you have to send designers from the U.S. down there. I cooperated with that and went down with them to visit the cooperatives, to attend the events, to lend support to the events for that particular effort.

Q: That was quite successful, wasn't it?

ROWELL: Very. It's still going on. Also the products that came to the Bolivian embassy — Daisy Wende's designs. She's doing very, very well providing work for the campesinos.

Q: One of the things I find of particular interest in thinking about your own experiences in the Foreign Service, is the fact that on the way, as it were, you developed so many skills in a variety of directions. Because, after all, as we said at the beginning of the interview, you entered the Foreign Service very early, very young, and all of the things that you have done since, you have done while you have been doing other things in relationship to the Foreign Service, of course. How did you manage to do all these things?

ROWELL: How did I manage? First of all I have a basic interest in people, and children specifically. I found my interest in children has led me to many things I never dreamed that I would be doing. For example, in Bolivia my interest in children led me to Save the Children, and cooperation with many projects to save the children. The largest one I did was, I was the liaison between Save the Children and AID for the construction of a road. When you're talking about a child, you're talking about the whole community in which the child lives. It's like the child opens all these doors for you, and I happen to have the interest, and background. I've worked with children, not just my own, but groups of children.

Q: I'd like to talk a bit about that road. Lots of people know about the road but very few people, I think, know what the circumstances were, and what you did to get it built.

ROWELL: When I met the director of Save the Children, Bruce Harris, and they were just opening their program there as we were arriving in Bolivia, he asked me if I wanted to come out and see their site, and I said, “Yes.” He was very surprised, and he said, “Well, you know, it's a long ride in a jeep.” I said, “I have blue jeans, that's okay. I want to go.” So I went with him, and I went with him many times out there to look at the projects that they were setting up. That's where I was able to coordinate efforts among wives in La Paz, not only American wives, but even among the Bolivians themselves. When they found out $20.00 would buy a hundred notebooks and pencils, people would contribute it. Or wool for the women to make things in the cooperative. As I kept going out and seeing things...

Q: What was the project specifically?

ROWELL: Save the Children. They have many elements in which they work, but this particular one was... children would have to walk three to four hours just to go to school. Some children never went to school. Products were rotting on the ground because they couldn't get them out.

Q: This was an area immediately adjoining La Paz?

ROWELL: It was in the department of La Paz but you'd have to go out of La Paz, across the Altiplano, and down into a valley, and it was down in this Inquisivi valley area.

Q: And that is perhaps typical of the remoteness, even very close to large settlements?

ROWELL: Oh, yes, and this is not even as remote as some of the other places. It was quite remote. It was a six-hour trip; it could be anywhere up to eight hours over mostly dirt road, in a jeep. It's just a road and in some places it was just one way, going around the edges of the mountains, and down into the valley. This particular road project that we're talking about — and when I say road, this is not a paved highway, because people in the U.S. have a tendency to think of paved highways — we're talking about taking a path, a horse path, a donkey path, and turning it into a barely two-lane dirt road.

In fact, the second phase of that road has been finished now. I went to the opening of the first segment of the road and I can't really explain, I don't have words to explain the feeling that we all felt. The people... they had a market there for the first time in their lives. Small trucks were able to drive to that point and bring in dry goods, and clothes, and some food items. The children were able to walk out. The people were able to get out. They were able to get in there to get them if they were ill and had to get them out to a clinic. The road was a big thing, and AID financed it along with cooperation from CARITAS, and Save the Children.

Q: It was your intervention, however, or I won't say intervention exactly, but your calling attention to the need for this particular expansion into a passable road.

ROWELL: I was the one that presented the project to AID, the assistant director and to the engineer — they had the engineer there.

Q: And these were people in Bolivia as representatives of AID, and they could accomplish what had not been able to be accomplished by the Save the Children fund, by itself.

ROWELL: Save the Children would not have done it by itself because they are not in that particular field, but it was necessary for them to continue their programs. It was also necessary for the infrastructure of the country, because eventually it's going to be a major road connecting two major points in this valley area, and eventually you'll be able to come back up into La Paz through the Yungas (valleys). The way it is now you have to turn around and go back.

Q: In other words this was the bringing together of resources, that, as you have pointed out earlier, were in a sense working separately, without seeing how, or having any means to accomplish something.

ROWELL: That's what I call bridge building, or networking. It's what I enjoy. I see different people doing things, and they could be doing them together and accomplishing something bigger than what they are on their own. I think that's an American attitude.

Q: I think so too, as far as I've been able to observe it. To what extent did the Bolivian government, or local, or otherwise, participate in this effort?

ROWELL: There was a Bolivian organization, it's like a counterpart to... it's an organization that AID works through and they cooperated fully. They were very supportive of it. It's a question of presenting it to them — like, here is the plan, and it's all together, and Save the Children is going to do this, and USAID is going to do this, and CARITAS is going to do

this. And the people themselves, which is the most important thing, are going to provide all of the labor. That's very important, it's extremely important because that's the way Save the Children works.

This meant that the women who lived along the new road had to help also, not just to bring food to their husbands and sons who were working there, but to actually get out there and dig themselves whenever the men couldn't. Each family made a commitment to contribute labor on a steady, predictable basis. You would see the women out there digging in the trenches.

Q: Do you think there's a possibility that that kind of cooperation would continue in other areas after you left. In other words, other people might see what you've accomplished in that given context and extend your ideas for that kind of cooperation in other areas? I don't mean geographical areas.

ROWELL: In Bolivia?

Q: In Bolivia.

ROWELL: In a cultural area, not in this particular area because it takes one person to coordinate it and now the director that I worked with of Save the Children has also left and gone back to their home office. The two moving forces have left, and someone else will have to come in and do something. But the road will be finished. We know now that AID will fund the last segment of the road, so that will be finished, which is nice to know that something will be finished. But, yes, I had a very good Bolivian friend, Rita Solar de Aramayo, who worked in the cultural arena, where I also have worked in putting together projects, but she has that ability. I worked with her, for example, on a project to restore a collection of colonial archangel paintings in a church about 35 minutes outside of La Paz, up on the Altiplano. When I saw them, I was stricken. They are a superb collection, and they're all there. There are three series; 32 colonial archangel paintings, they're

anonymous, but from an art history point of view it's a very valuable find. It's interesting that they're all still there.

Q: How did you come upon these?

ROWELL: She knew that I was interested in things like this, and she asked me to come and visit the church, and I did and became very enthusiastic about the project. We began step by step trying to see who we could get, what kind of organizations...

Q: What date are these paintings?

ROWELL: They are 17th century. The fact that they're intact is something, because many people come to Bolivia and they buy, and they take away the textiles, and they take away the paintings, and they take things away. So things become incomplete, and that's why this is a unique collection. This particular Bolivian woman has that ability and she is the one who now is carrying on what I started: with the Getty Foundation, and the World Monuments Fund in New York. She is the contact person now.

Q: How did you make contact with the Getty Foundation, for example? Do you know people there? Did you just introduce yourself, as it were?

ROWELL: Well, I kind of did. My husband's cousin is a professor at UCLA and has been very active in the cultural life there, and I called him on the phone, and I said, “Larry, whom do you know at Getty?” He said, “I don't, but I know somebody who knows somebody there.” I said, “Fine, I'm going to send you a copy...” and I didn't know what the correct procedure was, but I thought that might be one way. I went ahead, and I actually wrote the project with Rita Solar de Aramayo. She gave me all the information that was needed. I took it to the World Monuments Fund, because I had called the Tinker Foundation, and they said, “No, the people you want to see is the World Monuments Fund.” So I went to see them and told them that I had sent a copy to the Getty through this friend of my cousin's, and things are actually moving, and Rita is doing it.

And Partners of the Americas, another organization with whom I worked when I was in Bolivia also, they kind of caught the enthusiasm and they were able to get $3,000 from their office here in Washington towards the reconstruction of the church, which is primary to the restoration of the paintings. That's a project that, I think, will be finished.

Q: How many women in the embassy had participated with you in these efforts? Are these things that you found it desirable to do more or less on your own, or did you have help from other embassy wives?

ROWELL: It's interesting. I started out on my own, and then as I started talking to the embassy wives at coffees about trips I had been on, and things I'd been doing, I began to find that some of them would come up and say, “Le, could I go with you?” I'd say, “I'd be delighted.” And, in fact, it was one of the other embassy wives who... because we left Bolivia so quickly, Ed left in ten days, and I left in 17 and I had to pull everything together quickly... and it was the American wives that are finishing up some of the other projects — one that's going on in the same little village where the church is with the colonial paintings. We supplied the cement for them to finish their little tiny sports complex, and she's taking care of that. Another one is taking care of another project I was working on in another community on the other side of the Altiplano. This project was to coordinate the production of very small paper bags made in the Cochabamba area for a small pharmacy being built on the Altiplano. The people on the Altiplano could not afford to buy a whole bottle of aspirin. With the small bags they could buy just as many as they needed. So, yes, they became very enthusiastic, and many othem really pitched in for the quilt exhibit that we had at the residence. We charged for it, and all the proceeds from that went to these projects.

Q: I'd like to talk about that. Who supplied the quilts? You supplied the information obviously, and the knowledge to talk about what you were showing. But where did they come from?

ROWELL: When we went to Bolivia, I wanted to have American quilts as part of our Art in Embassies collection. The Museum of American Folk Art in New York loaned us six magnificent Amish quilts, all done in the early 1900s. The response to that part of our collection was so intense I thought, “Let's do something more.” So for two-and-a-half straight months I said to everybody I saw, “Do you have a quilt?” Well, it's amazing how many Americans, and even a couple of foreigners, had quilts — on the children's beds, hanging over a sofa, or somewhere. We were able to put together a collection of over 40 quilts, and other items — doll bed quilts, pillows, quilted items that related to it.

We cleaned out the whole downstairs of the residence. We brought beds down from the upstairs, we had some quilts on tables to show how you decorate with quilts. The old quilts were hung. USIS cooperated magnificently, as they always have, and supplied the structures for hanging the quilts. We had one room that was set up, with two wives demonstrating, during the opening hours of the show. This was only open for three days, unfortunately, but that was about all we could spare our downstairs. In the morning hours it was for private tours for the American Language Institute for their advanced students. They came and I gave them a tour, in English, and then they took notes and they had an exam on it afterwards. So it was a course exercise which was fun, and then students from the American school — all the different grades from the American school came and I took them through, and depending on their interest, I would focus on that particular thing. I did the same thing for our whole collection of art because we had graphics, and oils, and photographs, and all kinds of things. So depending on the particular interest of the group, then I would do the research on the artists and I would work up a tour focusing on that.

Q: It's not always the easiest thing at such a removed post to find the information on which to base your own lecture. How did you do that?

ROWELL: The American Language Institute, the Bi-National Center, has a fairly good library of who's who in American art, and who's who in... I did some on dance, special programs for their language classes, and literature. So they had a fair amount. Then I

kept badgering the Art in Embassies in Washington, “Why aren't you sending me more information about the pieces we have?” which I think they should, but I understand why they can't. I think not everybody uses their Art in Embassies collection, maybe, as we do for special interest programs. But it worked. As a matter of fact, I established a quilt contest among Bolivians which goes on now each year for design, and for piecing, and making quilts. They've been holding that at the Bi-National Center.

Q: What we've talked about so far leads directly, of course, not surprisingly to the award that you received as the second [recipient of the] so-called Bohlen Award [Established in 1982 by Mrs. Averell Harriman as a memorial to Mrs. Charles Bohlen. For an appreciation of Mrs. Bohlen, see especially the interview of Mrs. Fanny Chipman in this collection. Letters of recommendation in support of Mrs. Rowell's nomination are filed in this interview folder.] That was presented to you in 1984 after you had a fairly extensive time in Portugal, but you were recommended, I'm interested to notice, by an ambassador who had not been there so long before. So obviously what you had done had struck him as being extraordinarily important in the context of his appreciation of what ought to be done in Foreign Service context. Would you talk a little bit about that? The letter, of course, we will put in the file but I'd like somehow, if you could, an elucidation from you: what you did in Lisbon at that time, as you look back on it now, that you recall as being a pleasure to you as well as an accomplishment.

ROWELL: I guess it goes back to something I've said before in my belief that I find it's a honor to represent my country overseas. I may be unique today, but I honestly think it's an honor. It's a lot of hard work, which I think a lot of people don't understand. I also believe that working together we can accomplish a lot, and so I have a tendency to want to figure out things that bring people together to build bridges.

After 1973 it became more difficult. The wife of the spouse was no longer defined. We were private individuals, which is a bunch of nonsense as far as I'm concerned. I don't know whether to touch on that now or...

Q: I'd like to talk about that a bit later.

ROWELL: Okay, fine, just remember it because... But when we arrived in Lisbon [1978], again it was, “How am I going to approach this as the wife of the DCM, the first time?” My natural inclinations, my natural interests are in people, in children, in culture, educational projects, and I started looking around and saying, “What's available here? Where can I work? What can I do?” The first thing I realized it was the International Year of the Child, and I hadn't heard a word about it from anybody in the embassy. So I marched into USIS, and I said, “It's the International Year of the Child, are we doing anything?” And they said, “No. We don't have anything in particular.” And I said, “Would you mind if I did something?” I had thought of the art competition which also would bring together the three English-speaking schools at that time in Lisbon. There was some competition between the schools, as is natural. The majority of the students are Portuguese in all three of these schools, a minority of Americans in the American school, and a minority of Brits in the British school, and then St. Dominic's was an Irish Catholic school, again very few Americans, but some Americans, and then other nationalities. So we're talking about an international group, and I thought, “What a marvelous opportunity to bring these three schools together, and celebrate the International Year of the Child.” I developed the program for the art competition.

Q: What was the subject of the competition?

ROWELL: The rights of the child. Each student had to select one “right of the child” and transfer that into an art work. The works were judged in each of the three schools, and then they were brought together and judged for the best ones among the winners of the three schools. We had a big program at the ambassador's residence. The ambassador gave awards. The art work was then shown in all three schools, and then they would rotate it so the winners from the American school would go to the British school, and would go to St. Dominic's, and then the art work was shown in our Bi-National Center. It was shown at

the ambassador's residence, and some of the works were sent to the American school in London.

Q: I don't want to spend too much time on this, specifically, but when you say "rights of the child," what were the rights that were depicted in the art work that was presented?

ROWELL: Oh, they were the ten Rights of the Child as declared by the United Nations. For example, a child's right to education. It also depended on the age, but some of the simpler ones... a child sitting at the table with books and a teacher, that kind of thing. You had to be able to look at the art work, and recognize it's this right of the child. It was that kind of a project. I was able to do the same thing through dance, and that was really through our daughter.

Q: I wanted to ask you particularly about that because the kinds of things that you've been describing are rather remote from dance which I noticed was something that preoccupied you to some extent when you were in Portugal.

ROWELL: I'm a frustrated dancer. I would always love to have been a dancer so I've been living it through our daughter. She had a year off — she graduated early from high school immediately after a special summer school course in 1978. She had a choice whether to stay here in Washington and take that course or finish her senior year of high school in Portugal. She decided to stay here, so Ed went ahead to Lisbon alone. I stayed here with the children. She finished high school, and then we all went to Portugal, and she had a year off between high school and college. She was a serious classical ballerina, and studied modern dance when she went eventually off to college. I looked into who would be the best teacher, and I found Anna Mascolo, and Karen began her classes there. Anna Mascolo and I became very good friends. I could see her frustration as a teacher trying to administer her own school, and operating on a shoe string, getting virtually no support at all from the government, trying to do all of this on her own. The discipline was terrible, and she was thrilled to have Karen who came from the Royal Academy of Dancing and the

Cecchetti disciplines into her class as an example of what a disciplined ballerina should do and be.

So we became friends. And after Karen went back to the U.S. and went to college, Anna continued her friendship with me, and I was able to pass her to other cultural attach#s whom I knew in other embassies when she was looking for help to set up the Portuguese Council of Dance, which was sponsored by UNESCO.

Q: That was entirely new?

ROWELL: Yes, absolutely. It's the first time in Portugal, and Anna with my help was able to make those connections, not only through our embassy but through other embassies, to get people to help sponsor the UNESCO Portuguese Council of Dance. That's still operating so I'm a founding member of that, and now that I'm back I was able to help already with one event.

Q: Were you surprised when you were chosen for the Bohlen Award?

ROWELL: I was astounded. To be absolutely honest, I didn't even know that it existed, much less that I had been nominated for it. Yes, I was surprised, and I was very pleased. I was pleased, and when I accepted the award, and I meant this, I accepted on behalf of all Foreign Service wives who do a lot and who don't get recognized. I meant it sincerely when I said that I thought every person should take a minute to sit down and at least write a note to say thank you for wives and their contributions, and I think for the most part it still is important to say thank you for what they do, even though today we're private individuals and there are more male spouses.

Also back to the other thing. Again, it's that bridge building. Bringing people together and making things work, including people in on everything. In other words, the American embassy needs to have contact with the American business community. It's vitally important, and with the diplomatic corps, and with the political leaders of the country,

and the economic leaders, and the cultural, and the academic. You need to touch bases everywhere.

Q: Would you say this kind of bridge building, and organizational skill, is — I won't say uniquely American — but perhaps more characteristic of American women.

ROWELL: Yes.

Q: ... than of other national women, almost no matter where.

ROWELL: Yes. It's certainly been my experience, and it's interesting that you should mention that because when I was mentioning my Bolivian friend, Rita Aramayo, her English is pretty good, but she's never studied in the United States, but she's had a lot of connection with Americans, and she's aware of American culture. I think it's that kind of woman, a foreign woman, who is familiar with our culture, that can take on that role and try to perform it. But I think, yes, it's almost uniquely American women that have that ability. We're brought up with it right from our PTA days, right on through.

Q: I remember a marvelous story of a diplomat whom we knew posted here, who could not get over the fact that when his youngest child began kindergarten, the first thing the kindergarten students did was to form committees to serve the milk, to clean up afterward, and so on. He said he began to understand a little better from that experience.

ROWELL: I hadn't thought about that, but you're right, we're inculcated from the very beginning on how to get it done. It's true, and I think it's in spades for American embassies overseas to work like that.

Q: You speak about your Bolivian friend. Do you think, not only in Bolivia, but perhaps in other cultures, there is some hesitancy to work together and to follow a person, like your friend, in the kinds of activities that she is carrying on now? Or do you think that, once introduced, other nationalities see how important and valuable that kind of cooperation can

be? Of course, it depends, I realize, on the circumstances, but I wonder if, for example, in Bolivia it has, perhaps because of her effort, come to be recognized that there are ways to accomplish things?

ROWELL: Yes. The way she did it, and the way she's doing I think, is ideal. She does it with the cooperation of all Bolivians. I was the only foreigner, and I was accepted in their group because of my experience at the Kennedy Center and my other experiences. I was accepted in the group, and also because I was the ambassador's wife. That helped a little bit, but it was more what I had done at the Kennedy Center, and my experience with how things work there, that I was welcomed into this group. She relied on me for certain things, but the majority of her support came from other Bolivians. So she had a base in Bolivia, and that's the way it has to be. In other words, it's as if she was doing it, and I was supporting her. I wasn't doing it, and there's the mistake a lot of Americans make: to go in and do it, and then you leave and the whole thing falls apart. That doesn't work. You have do it through the people themselves. They have to want to do it. You can support them, and even then sometimes it doesn't always hold together.

Q: I'd like to talk now about the 1972 Directive. We touched on that indirectly. You were in the country, if not in Washington, in the several years before the directive actually came out. I think you were in Palo Alto.

ROWELL: In '70-'71 we were in Palo Alto, and then we came back here in August of '71.

Q: Did you have any inkling before you read about or heard about the directive that it was being prepared?

ROWELL: No.

Q: ... either indirectly or through perhaps your activities with the Foreign Service Women's Association?

ROWELL: I had an inkling. I wasn't really consciously aware of it. I knew that something was happening, but being in Latin America we didn't have any consciousness-raising sessions, or we didn't have a lot of people complaining and saying, “I want to work, or I want to do this, or I want to be that, or I don't want to be here.” We didn't have it where I was. We just didn't have it.

One spouse in Honduras wanted to have a job and it was absolutely impossible. I don't know if you're going to touch on jobs but we can come back to that.

Q: Yes, I am definitely, please go ahead.

ROWELL: She was an urban planner. As it turns out she was the only urban planner in the whole country, but there was no way that she was going to have a job. If the Hondurans needed an urban planner, they were going to hire a Honduran before they were going to hire her. It was a frustrating experience for her. She ended up not having a job while she was there.

Q: Had she actually been able to practice her profession either elsewhere or...

ROWELL: In the States, yes. Anyhow, I had heard that this directive was maybe going to come about, but I wasn't in Washington while all this was moving on, so I really wasn't aware of it. I have very mixed feelings about it, of course. What it did for many spouses and for myself included, is that it took away a structure and left no guidelines to define the role of a spouse. I am now a private individual, but I can tell you as the wife of the DCM, and the wife of the ambassador, I am not a private individual. I could only be a private individual if I said to my husband, “I'm not going with you. I'm going to stay home.” Then I would be a private individual. But if I choose to go with him, as the wife of the DCM, and the wife of the ambassador, I am not a private individual.

Q: Do you think that extends to all ranks in the embassy, or do you think there is a cut-off point below which young women can indeed perhaps maintain a privacy, should they choose to?

ROWELL: Yes, they can. I think they can, they just choose not to participate. It also depends on what section of the embassy, but if you're the wife of some junior person in the administrative section, your representation, your public, your outside role, is minimal. It's almost non-existent. I'm talking more about spouses who have a possibility of a representational role, especially the ambassador's wife, and in many cases the DCM's wife. The DCM is generally the inside person but very often they have to step in and fill in for the ambassador.

Q: Do you think that in your eyes, as well as in the eyes of the general public, representation really means — whether it does or not is another matter — social activity, participating in social activities, rather than any other aspect? Representation after all can be many different things.

ROWELL: Exactly.

Q: It has become in the eyes of many women, I think, in the Foreign Service, a term to be applied to social activities rather more than anything else.

ROWELL: Yes. I think what you're saying is correct, and I think the American public sees representation as standing at a cocktail party with a glass in your hand. Okay, that's one small part of representation. There are a couple of things. First of all, it's not easy to do representation. Going to an official dinner party is a lot of hard work. I have gone home evenings and taken two aspirins, and gone to bed. If you sit next to the Yugoslav ambassador, who only speaks Yugoslav and no Portuguese, and no French, and nothing else, let me tell you it's an excruciating evening. Then you sit next to somebody else who has maybe a few words of French... I have only a few words of French, I mean, I had

French when I was in school, not French to carry me through a dinner table conversation... I may be able to read something, but forget the dinner table conversation. It's a lot of hard work. And it's hard work to be able to move from one group to another... you don't go there and just stand, or sit in a corner and talk with one person all evening. You're there to represent the United States, so that means you have to work. It takes a lot of effort. I think politicians understand this. I don't think anybody else does. Maybe businessmen do because they have an agenda. They'll go into a room and they'll say, “Okay, I have to talk to that person about that, I have to talk with that person about that.” That's what representation is about on the social level. I think people aren't aware of that. I think a lot of Foreign Service officers and their spouses aren't aware of that now.

I remember an incident in Argentina at the embassy. I was standing talking to an Argentine and the ambassador's wife zipped by me and went over to a group of American embassy wives standing there talking together. She said, “Ladies, talk to the guests.” I could hear her in my other ear. They broke up and went and talked to the guests. I'm sure that was a lesson, that you're not invited there just to socialize with one another. You can do that anytime, but you're supposed to be a part of the family and represent, and move around, and talk to people. It's the same thing whether it's in the residence or whether it's outside. You're supposed to move around and talk to people, and get to know them on the social level. But for me representation is a much larger concept.

Q: I was struck by something I read that Mrs. Harriman in presenting one of the awards had said. I wonder how you would respond to her comment?

Mrs. Harriman said that she had observed that wives of prominent men, particularly government officials, occasionally had an opportunity to say things that their husbands might not be able to. I never encountered, myself, even one such experience. In fact, I very often felt rather inhibited, perhaps because of my husband's specialities, in talking as if I knew anything about what his professional work included. How do you feel about

that? Did you ever find yourself in a circumstance where you were able to say something on Ed's behalf, and in turn on behalf of the United States that he was unable to say?

ROWELL: Do you mean because he was there, or because he couldn't go?

Q: No, whether he was there or not.

ROWELL: I have been to represent him in Bolivia on a couple of occasions where he couldn't go and I would make a speech as his representative, and on his behalf that he could not be there but how much he appreciated the work that had been done, whether it was a potable water project, or whatever it is. I have done that.

Q: But there were never any occasions when, simply because you were a woman, you were able to make an observation, or ask a question which your husband perhaps in his official capacity, felt reluctant to do?

ROWELL: I can't think of a specific incident, but I know there have been occasions when he perhaps has explained something and it maybe wasn't completely understood in the context... for example, if he was talking to a group of Bolivian women. There was one instance where I was able to take it and turn it into something that related to them, so they could understand. It's that kind of re-interpretation, but it depends on your audience. I would not obviously do that with a group of men particularly. I can't remember the incident but it was something similar to that with a group of Bolivian women with whom I had been working and he was not as familiar.

Q: You have talked about being able to interest members of an embassy where you have been serving to participate in certain activities by reason of your own enthusiasm, and so on. Do you find the life of a wife of a deputy chief of mission, and an ambassador, is a rather lonely life today in terms of the kind of joint participation that used to be the case? Do you have to induce people to appear at social gatherings? How is this working now?

ROWELL: There's some parts of it that are the same. There are some people who still feel, and understand, the importance of going to the ambassador's residence or participating in certain projects. I find, for example, that people coming in from the Peace Corps are much more attuned to the esprit de corps, and let's work together, and what can I do to help you. There are always the spouses who come up and say, “Please let me know whatever I can do to help you.” I was astounded at the number in Bolivia. I have a few also in Lisbon. But it's not the same as it was before. I feel like I'm a transition person. I came in in a traditional Foreign Service, and now it's a completely different kind of Foreign Service. I've kind of gone over the bridge and I'm coming out the other side now.

There are many spouses that don't understand what it is that needs to be done.

Q: May I ask why they do not understand? Is it a question of the times, they choose not to understand, or they have not been given elsewhere the kind of instruction, or assistance, that one would expect they would have?

ROWELL: I think it's a combination of things. I think for a lot of them, it's their upbringing. When you have... say both parents are working, you don't sit down in the evening maybe and have dinner certainly in the traditional sense in which I grew up, and have people to your home and know how to entertain people, and make them feel welcome and that kind of thing. I think it's a question of the times. A lot of the women are working and they're not interested. Many of them haven't had the opportunity to go to the Overseas Briefing Center for any of the courses either. So they haven't had that background. They don't really understand.

Q: Do you make any attempt to supplement or, in fact, initiate any kind of training? You said you occasionally have given courses. Do you do that on a regular basis?

ROWELL: I did it when I was in Lisbon as the wife of the DCM, but I had to be careful doing that. You don't want it to be like a command performance, but the CLO coordinators asked for it, so it was set up and I did it a number of times there. I also did it as...

Q: What subjects did you touch on?

ROWELL: We touch on how to entertain at home, official parties, official cars, how to do it yourself, how to do it in a restaurant. I mean when you entertain in a restaurant you don't walk in and say, “Hey waiter, I'd like a table.” And also what might pertain to the particular post.

Q: Yes, of course, I imagine that would be very important.

ROWELL: I did it in Bolivia. Again, it was the wife of the DCM who asked to have it done in Bolivia because she was unsure of what to do. I wasn't going to volunteer to do it myself. Now we'll see. They are talking about doing one again in Lisbon, but as the wife of the ambassador I have to be a little bit careful about doing that kind of thing. I don't want people to think it's a command performance. Some people don't realize that I have done it before, and I have done it at the Overseas Briefing Center. When you become the wife of the ambassador they kind of think you can do whatever you want, and your past experience doesn't make any difference. “Oh well, she did that because she's the wife of the ambassador.” So one has to be careful.

Q: One of the things, of course, that the directive did away with was the evaluation in the husband's efficiency report of the wife and her “performance”. Did it ever bother you that you were evaluated?

ROWELL: No, it never bothered me. I guess I shouldn't say that so blithely. It would have bothered me if there had been something negative in that report. If I had ever known about anything negative in that report. But in all fairness, it isn't the correct thing. If you're not

going to be paid, why should you be evaluated. On the other hand, stripping all of the structure...

Q: What was the structure? You have spoken about this several times. What do you think the structure was that was removed at the time, and by the directive? Because apart from the evaluation of the wife, one could say that nothing changed and that that evaluation really was the sole evidence of the State Department's interest in any wife.

ROWELL: Perhaps, but I think even without the evaluation, if the wife and the employee don't have that kind of relationship and understanding of what they're doing, it's going to show in his work. I think I honestly believe that. If I wanted to be a detriment... I can't assure Ed's success, but I can certainly assure his failure. If I wanted to do something that was going to be really detrimental to his career... I mean if I had some big problems... if I were an alcoholic, or if I were going off and having affairs with other men, or something like that, believe me, word gets out. I think it would hurt his career.

Q: But those are rather, shall we say, personal matters however important they are, but when you come to the question of representation, for example, do you think that the fact a wife is present on a given occasion really is important in the big scheme of things? I am working my own way through this, and I'm very interested in what you have to say about this.

ROWELL: I guess I believe it's important or I wouldn't be there. I do believe it's important. Let me give you an example — something that happened to us recently in Lisbon. It was the National Day of a Latin American country, I won't say which one. It was absolutely impossible for Ed and me to attend that National Day but we sent the DCM and his wife as our representatives. (We were engaged in an American exhibit and dinner at the Gulbenkian Foundation which had been planned long ahead, and it was something that we really had to go to.) The day after we went to another National Day and we encountered this particular Latin American ambassador and his wife. They both literally, almost virtually

attacked us. She said to me, “Why didn't you come to our National Day?” I explained, I said, “We sent a letter over. Didn't...'' “Well,” she said, “we were very hurt that you weren't there.” He said exactly the same thing to my husband. It's not necessarily us. It's that we're the United States. If I'm there, I think it makes a difference. For example, in that particular instance, if it had been possible for me to have gone and Ed not to have gone, they would have accepted that and been very pleased. Yes, I think the spouse can make a big difference in instances like that.

The other thing that makes a big difference is, it's part of the U.S. image. How people see us: do they see us as all single individuals, as all single parents, or do they see us as a couple working together. I'm not saying that's right or wrong, I'm just saying that is still, I think, a part of the American image. That we are families, and that we do have couples. And when you're dealing with traditional societies, as we have always dealt in Latin America and Portugal, that's important. The appearance is important, how you look, how you act, are you there. If you're not there, why aren't you there? They want to know why. Is she sick? Is she working? Is she out of the country? Why isn't she there? And then if she never goes... that's something you just have to work out. If you never go, then people will get used to never seeing you, and that's, I guess, another way of doing it. But I happen to think, if you're going to be there it is the better... if you're in the country I think it's the better thing to go.

Q: I'd like to talk a little bit about your reaction to various proposals that have been made — none of which has yet been implemented — for paying spouses, particularly the wives of ambassadors. Do you feel compensation for representation is adequate for your purposes? Are you and Ed able to manage reasonably well with the amount of representation allowance that you have for those purposes?

ROWELL: We manage because we have to manage on what we have. So we try to figure out different ways to stretch the representation funds, like doing joint representational things with the defense attach# office, or with AID, or with USIS, and things like that. How

to stretch these representational funds. We personally do a lot of representation. I think it's very worthwhile. We get a lot of mileage out of our representational events.

Paying the spouse — that's a thorny question. I don't feel that I personally have to be paid to go to representational functions. I definitely think I should be paid for doing the job I did in Bolivia, and that was the job of housekeeper, all of the ORE, all of the representational vouchers, all of the accounting. I did it all. Now, if I hadn't been there, they would have had to detail somebody from the administrative section to do that, but I did it and I was not paid. I think that is a paying job. If the wife of the ambassador says, “Yes, I will do that.” That is a real job. That is not makeshift. That is a real job.

Q: Who does it in Lisbon?

ROWELL: We have a housekeeper at the residence. Most big embassies do, and they need it.

Q: Do you have a social secretary?

ROWELL: No.

Q: You answer all your invitations and...

ROWELL: No. We have a protocol secretary that works for the ambassador, the DCM, the political counselor, economic counselor. Any of the counselors who give representational things, it goes through the protocol secretary. I do all my own thank-you notes. When I have to do them in Portuguese I either send them in to her to be done, or I give them very often to the housekeeper who is bilingual. If it's just a personal thank-you note to a Portuguese for a lunch or something like that, I do those myself.

Q: You have a housekeeper who perhaps takes most of the burden of planning, strictly speaking, meals and that sort of thing, or do you work with her?

ROWELL: I work with her every day and sometimes two and three times a day. I set up all the menus, I give her all the recipes, she translates them, gives them to the cook. When they don't work, I go down into the kitchen and show the cook how it is to be done. I spend a lot of time doing that. I spend a lot of time doing that because I care about it. I care about representation. I want it to be special when people come to the American ambassador's residence. I don't want just a white table cloth, a bowl of flowers and two candles; and consomme for a first course, and your lombo porco or whatever it is for your main course, I mean your typical dinner. I want it to be American, and I want it to be different, and I want them to go away saying, “Wow, that was something really different.” So, I put a lot of effort into it.

Q: How do you manage to do that? Or is it possible to do that easily, or did that require the gathering of ingredients and that sort of thing?

ROWELL: In Bolivia it was more difficult. I had to really think about what was available and I also had to find out what were the strong points of the cook. What things she could do the best, and could she make American pies, and if she couldn't, then I'd have to go to cakes. But as it turned out she could make American pies, and she could make an angel food cake, and things that are traditionally American that I like to serve. And then I go from there. I see what the cook can do, what ingredients are available locally, and then I go back to my menus and cookbooks and things, and I look to see what's available and what can I do that's different with what's available.

Q: How have your children, having now grown out of accompanying you overseas, how have they looked back on their Foreign Service experiences? Do you think with pleasure? With regret? How do you think they see their growing up years?

ROWELL: I think they all look back with great pleasure. There's no question about it that they are better people for having been in the Foreign Service. I lunched yesterday with our eldest son who is 30, and I was asking him about his experiences in Central America. It

was interesting because he did not remember any of the restrictions, and security, that we were faced with. And he said, “Mom, I think it's because you never showed it.” I thought, “Well, that's pretty good.” But then when he came back to the United States he said that one of the things that struck him was that he was listening to the radio, and he heard a song — just a little tune — and he realized that it was a tune for an advertisement for gum or something, and he thought, “That's really silly. Why do we have to sing a tune about chewing gum, and why do Americans do all these funny things and they don't know anything about the problems of the people in Honduras, for example?” That was his attitude. They all are without prejudice.

Q: When you and they came back to the United States from one of your assignments, or another, did you find people with whom you came in contact interested in what you had just come from? What you have just said about your son seems to indicate perhaps that he found that there was less interest than he assumed there would be.

ROWELL: One of my most difficult moves in the Foreign Service was back to California, to Stanford University for the year my husband was going to study in the Sloan Program. We had been five years overseas, and it was one of the most difficult years I have encountered. It was a time of turmoil, Watts was going on in the Los Angeles area, articles were coming out in Time and Newsweek and every other publication: the American family is disintegrating. I mean, I expected to come back and see everybody lying flat on the ground. It was... where we were, we got limited information. I questioned everybody who came to Honduras about, “What is going on?”

When I came back it was a real adjustment for all of us. We had prohibited television. We hadn't had television, and we said, “Sorry, no TV.” There were a few exceptions, [after] homework assignments, or maybe a cultural thing on the weekend or something like that. Our eldest son, who was in the sixth grade at the time, came home one day and he said, “I can't talk to anybody.” I said, “What's the matter?” “Well, they all talk about things I don't know anything about.” I said, “Honey, just try to change the subject then, talk about,

maybe soccer. You have to find something they're interested in that's around them. Not what you have been doing."

I was tongue-tied. People kept asking me what did I do, and I couldn't explain to them what I had been doing for five years. So I finally just decided to tell them I was a writer, and that was fine, and they didn't care. They didn't even care what I had written, whether it was a nursery rhyme, or a book, or a play, or whatever. You just say you're a writer, because I had to figure out one concise word to describe what I had done. Nobody was interested in what I had done. I think that's human nature. I don't think that's necessarily Foreign Service going home. I think that's going from here to Sioux City, Iowa. They don't care what you've been doing in Washington, DC. They're more interested in what they're doing in Sioux City, Iowa. It's not unique to the Foreign Service, but it's very frustrating when that's your whole life and nobody really cares.

Q: Yes, indeed it is. Do you think that generally speaking, however, people are interested in the fact that you are able to speak Portuguese and Spanish?

ROWELL: Yes, they think that's quite marvelous and astounding. Speaking of that, I think language training is extremely important for spouses. If you're the wife of the ambassador... you know, I sit next to the president, I sit next to the prime minister, I'm the one that sits next to that person, and in Portugal he (the president) doesn't speak English. So you have to be able to speak the language.

Q: You have actually been a participant in a number of the courses at various times that are given in what is now the Overseas Briefing Center. Do you feel that the courses that are given now as you observe them are adequate in terms of preparation for, generally speaking, for overseas living? What about language training? Do you think there is enough of it? Is it possible at the embassy in Lisbon for wives to get training in language in Portuguese?

ROWELL: When there are funds available, and this is part of the problem. They keep cutting funds, and when they cut them, they cut the language training. But it's a double-edged sword because very often the spouses are well intentioned and they sign up for their language classes, [but] they don't participate fully. So what happens is, when you add up the numbers at the end of the year and you find that, in fact, you started with 40 and you're ending up with 20, you can't justify for the next fiscal year the language course again. So it's a problem, but language is vital. It's the key to everything. The Overseas Briefing Center is one of the biggest supports that the Foreign Service has. I can't say enough good things about it. They progress, they move, they change their courses. I think if an entering Foreign Service spouse, and employee, could take the courses that are offered at the Overseas Briefing Center, I think we'd have many fewer problems. I think people would really understand more what it is all about. Not only for themselves personally, because there are personal courses on finance, and career building, and representation, and the whole gamut. I think it's there, but I think not enough people are still taking advantage of it.

Q: I think that you said that you might participate, during this visit to the United States, in an ambassador's spouse course seminar. What does that consist of? I had not heard of such a thing before. Have you participated in such a course?

ROWELL: Yes, yes, I did and I have also been a resource person, and I also helped in producing the ambassador spouse, and the DCM spouse notebooks. It's a notebook full of guidelines for every facet of life overseas whether it's representation, dealing with the media, language, just everything. And, yes, the course exists. It's continually changing. Depending on whether the ambassador's spouse is a spouse of a political appointee or a career person, you have to approach it in a completely different way. A political appointee's spouse simply doesn't know all the jargon, and how all the agencies work, and who's who, and that kind of thing. So you have to find a different focus, and what I have done is, I act as a resource person when they have their round table discussion. I share

my experiences, point out some of the things that I have found important. If you have a family overseas, for example, it's important that those children maintain their contacts with their friends back in the United States. So writing letters is an important part of what you do, and keep subscriptions up to your magazines, whatever. But keeping your contacts going so that the children don't feel isolated overseas, and for yourself personally.

Q: Do you look back at individuals, women, whom you have met in the Foreign Service as being among those who have inspired you? Or do you think that you were very much a self-starter?

ROWELL: I think it's both. I'm a self-starter but I am continually looking for people who are role models. I look at people — wives of senior people, or in other businesses even, or wives of politicians, or whoever they may be — I look upon them as role models and I think to myself, “Ah, now that's a good thing, I think I'll try to do that.”

Q: In other words, probably your inspiration comes from many sources, and not necessarily from one or two individuals, whether in the American Foreign Service or other diplomatic services.

ROWELL: Absolutely. It would be a composite of many, many people starting with my mother, and my sister, and many people who have influenced my life.

Q: I'm jumping around here a little but I did notice that Ed was an inspector in the Foreign Service for four years, I think. Were you able to go on trips with him, or was that at a time, as I think it may have been, when your children were quite young and you stayed here?

ROWELL: Yes, and his role was a bit different from the traditional inspector. He did domestic and functional inspections, and designed programs for that here in Washington, and then he did have some trips overseas. I did join him on one to Paris, at my expense of course. He was not gone continually. The majority of his time was spent here in Washington so it was a different...

Q: But I would have thought that that would have given him, and you indirectly, a rather unique opportunity to look at the Foreign Service as an institution at a very early age. Most people don't have such an opportunity, particularly in the inspectors' context until much later in one's career.

ROWELL: For Ed it did, but for me it was a job that was really his job, and I was doing my own thing here in Washington.

Q: We've talked a little bit about money. How did you manage to put your kids through college?

ROWELL: It was tough, it was really tough, loans, basically loans. We've always gotten along on one salary. Some of the consulting work I did at the Overseas Briefing Center, you get paid by the job. Also the cross-cultural paper I did. I did one contract job in Central America, but it's very sporadic, and it's very minimal.

How did we manage on one salary? We cut a lot of corners. We also... I think being in the Foreign Service helped. I think if we'd had one salary maybe living somewhere else it might not have been as easy. But actually, all in all, we spent a number of years back in Washington, with three children too. That was expensive. We just cut corners, I think like any other family trying to do it on one salary. We didn't have a lot. We started out with one dining room table, six chairs and a king size bed, and that was it.

Q: One of the things that I know you've been particularly interested in, and have become very expert in, is interior decorating. Did you develop that perforce?

ROWELL: Yes. I've always had an interest in it and at one time I seriously considered even taking a correspondence course, of trying to do it. Then other things [intervened] and I never did. I think, in a way, almost every Foreign Service spouse is an interior decorator. I think you're forced into it. You carry your rolls of fabric around with you and you put it up, and you take it down, you don't cut it, and it fits in, in the next place. But I've always been

interested in design. I did study art for five years, painting. I just enjoy design of any kind whether it's in somebody's house, or a painting, or a sculpture, or whatever it is.

Q: I can see that would be very helpful to anybody in the Foreign Service. Do you think skills really help a good deal — playing the piano, doing a sport well?

ROWELL: Absolutely.

Q: ... singing.

ROWELL: Yes, yes. Tennis, for example, is one sport that both Ed and I play, and has introduced us to many interesting people. I know people who play golf have the same stories. My painting, for example, in Argentina and Honduras. I met fascinating women in my painting classes. So, absolutely, any skill that you have... and, of course, playing the piano, I mean you can be the life of the party. That's a marvelous skill.

Q: Do you and Ed, or Ed, play the piano?

ROWELL: We did. We don't play well, but we both sing, and that has been a help. I mean in groups. As a matter of fact when we first went to the northeast of Brazil Ed sang in a quartet, and they performed at parties, which was great fun.

Q: That's very good. I've always envied anybody who could sing, particularly well enough to sing in that way.

ROWELL: Ed has a very nice voice actually, so it was fun.

Q: We talked about living under difficult security situations. Does the embassy in Portugal in Lisbon now show some of the some of the same signs as embassies here in Washington? For example, bulletproof glass, restrictions on free entry into the embassy compound or complex whatever it may be?

ROWELL: Yes. We have Mylar at all the windows. We have 24-hour-a-day guard service. Entry is absolutely restricted, your name has to be with the guard at the gate or you may not come into the residence. You actually may not even come in the front door of the residence anymore in Lisbon, because the front door — there's only one step right onto the street — so they cut through some of the little ante rooms on that entry level, and you have to come in a side door through something that looks like a cage into the side of the residence and then into the entry hall and then up the stairs.

Security is not as tight in Portugal as it was say, for example, in Bolivia. I'm relatively free to go anywhere I want to. I can drive my car. Ed does have a guard, and depending on the situation, sometimes they'll assign a follow car if things are particularly dicey in western Europe, or there's been some major international incident. Then it will settle down and he won't have the follow car, he'll just have one guard in the car. But it's a bulletproof car. The regional security officer gets very nervous if we unannounced go out someplace, which we do but we always call the security guard before we leave to let them know exactly where we're going to be, the telephone number, how long we're going to be there. It's an unprogrammed movement. Nobody knows. Sometimes we don't even know until the last minute if we want to go to a movie.

Q: Would you say that you've been having fun in the Foreign Service?

ROWELL: Yes, I have. There have been frustrations and some disappointments. The biggest disappointments have been not being able to be home when special events are going on with the family. Missing family celebrations, and now with all the children back in United States, it's the same thing. That's probably the biggest drawback.

Q: As you think back on both this interview and other moments of reflection, do you have any observations about your life, and the Foreign Service, that you think are relevant to the present, possibly the future?

ROWELL: People talk about the changes in the Foreign Service, and there have been changes. But the Foreign Service is simply a reflection of what is happening in our society in the United States. I think it's going to be a mixed Foreign Service. In other words, I'm not sure that the feeling of the kind of esprit de corps that used to exist is going to... it's slowly fading out. Many people, I think, are looking upon the Foreign Service as a job, as opposed to a career. When we came in, it was a career. There was no question, unless we were thrown out, of course, that you wouldn't stay and finish, and dodge the bullets if you have to, and ride in armored cars if you have to, and send the children back to private schools if you have to. You do that. It's a mission. It's a service, and that still exists to a point, but it's changing. But as I said, it's just a reflection of what's going on in the United States.

The role of the spouse has changed too. Not only the reflection of the role of women in the United States, but when that memorandum went around declaring us private individuals, we have to define our own roles now. What are we supposed to do? We're not supposed to do anything, but, “Oh yes, you are supposed to do something.” I think it's that... trying to figure out what that role is, how far can you go? Can you ask another spouse if she would like to do something? I feel that you can without commanding her to do it. But some senior spouses get so paranoid that they won't ask anybody to do anything. It's difficult. But I think the Foreign Service is here to stay. I don't think we're going to fade away.

Another thing I feel very strongly about in the Foreign Service is that we are our own worst enemies. Our public relations are terrible. They are non-existent and I think that if we had some good public relations as to what is the Foreign Service, and how that should be carried out can be discussed, something can be done about it. People hear about us only when we're dead, when we've been assassinated, or we've been kidnapped. But there's a lot of the Foreign Service that's positive and good, and things that are going on that nobody knows about. I'm talking about the American public for starters. They really have no concept of what the Foreign Service is all about, and some kind of a good public

relations campaign... this is a Foreign Service officer, here's his family, these are the kinds of things that they're doing for you overseas. We're building relationships, because your husband's business wherever may want to have business dealings with this company in Portugal, or China, or Japan, or wherever it is. I think if you can relate it to them on their level of something they understand, they would understand what we're doing. What we're doing, in many respects, is not too different from what everybody does. You want to make friends. You have people to your house. You want to meet different people. It's just in a different context, that's all.

Q: Why do you think the State Department has not, or whoever is responsible for such public relations, done such a thing on a broader scale? It's been done, shall I say, on a rather academic level sending Foreign Service officers to talk about the problem in X country in wide terms.

ROWELL: That's on a different level. At one point... didn't we have a trailer or something going around with a family? Because I had at one time, in the back of my mind, I'd thought about Ed and the children and I maybe doing something like that. But we were never back here at the right time, or under the right circumstances to do it. But something like that where you're going around and maybe talking to civic groups and organizations. Ed and I have done this a couple of times just for friends to groups. People's eyes are wide open. They have absolutely no idea, and afterwards they're so grateful for what we're doing. And we're not the only ones doing it. There are lots of us out there doing it. Anyway it's a dream. Maybe the dream will come true one of these days, that we'll get it together and let people know the positive things that we're doing.

Q: Following on from some of the things that we've been talking about earlier, particularly the importance of the wife and her presence with her husband. You have had experience of this in various places where you've been. You had particular entree into various groups, cultural and otherwise, that perhaps Ed might perforce not have had. You were able to use that very successfully in interpreting to him perhaps certain aspects of a given culture.

ROWELL: Yes. It happened for me the first time in Curitiba. I went to call on the general's wife, and I was able then to build a relationship with her, and her husband received my husband with rather open arms which surprised a lot of people. But I think it was because I had called on her and I was beginning to understand the Brazilian culture. I also was able to interpret for Ed some of the reasons why they did certain things. I certainly was able to lead him through social events, and get his food at a buffet table, thanks to a Brazilian friend who coached me to push my way through my elders to a buffet table and serve both myself and my husband. I believe he never would have eaten if I hadn't learned how to do that! And I was able to pick up substantive information from the wives. Another result of my call on the general's wife was that she included me on afternoon teas where I was able to meet many military wives, one of whom is still a friend today. At one tea we were talking and the general's wife asked about our young son, Ted, and wondered if I had an ample supply of baby food on hand for him. I was a bit puzzled at the question and said that I had about a week's supply. She suggested I get at least a supply for two more weeks. That evening I recounted that conversation to Ed who immediately picked up on it and predicted that a coup was in the works. He was the first to report this to the State Department. As I mentioned, the coup did take place.

In Portugal when we were there the first time (1978-83), all of my contacts with people in the various fields of culture, education, among the political wives, has paid us enormous dividends. Little did we ever realize that we would be sent back to Portugal, and so soon (1988). It's unusual I think for someone who's been a DCM four-and-a-half years later — to go back to be the ambassador. But the circumstances were very unusual also. We had not had an ambassador in Portugal for 13 months. The Portuguese were very upset, and were making all kinds of threats like withdrawing their ambassador from Washington.

Ed was given a recess appointment, so we were direct transferred from Bolivia back to Portugal. It was a real eye opener, like going home you expect people to welcome you with open arms. Well, in fact, many of our personal friends did, but the government people

and the official people, did not because they were showing their disappointment and dissatisfaction with the United States for having left them without an ambassador for 13 months.

Ed went ahead of me because he left Bolivia in ten days. I stayed on seven days longer and packed up our things, and then I followed along. Ed said to me that he couldn't participate officially for the first week-and-a-half because he had to present his credentials, but he went to the Gulbenkian Foundation to one of the concerts, and he said when he walked in the front door, he was just overwhelmed with the number of people coming up and giving him a hug, and saying, “Oh, how wonderful that you're back.” So all of those relationships, and what we did before, has paid enormous dividends in helping to establish us as credible representatives of the United States, that we do care about Portugal, because we do. We were there before, and even now, we attend everything that we can. Not just political, not just official things. We go to cultural things, educational things, we go to inaugurations of housing developments. So people know that we care. But it was this building of friendships and bridges when we were there before, that has helped us to enter again in a positive way into the society, and into the life of the people in Portugal.

Q: You had spoken about the importance of building bridges from one group to another within the embassy. Is not that an important factor that any Ambassador and his wife must consider?

ROWELL: Yes. I feel that strongly. We initiated this as DCM when we went to Lisbon the first time. It had not been done. We had periodic gatherings of the country team, and we did it generally when people were leaving, or coming. Not frequently, but enough to let them know that we cared. We wanted them all together, and they enjoyed it tremendously. They all felt part of something important. We could thank them for things that they had done, or let them know of things that were coming up, and they in turn could let their people know what was going on. We have found it to be a very useful vehicle for building solid community at the top of your pyramid. So that this good feeling goes down through all

the sections and people will say, “Well, gee, the ambassador or the DCM... they really care about what we do,” whether its AID, or the military, or whatever agency it is. It makes a big difference.

Q: I should think this would go quite a long way in offsetting some of the reluctance of wives, particularly, but perhaps husbands as well as officers, to participate in the representational activities in any given place.

ROWELL: Yes, it does. It helps tremendously. And the other thing is saying thank you. When we've had couples to the embassy, and they've done a particularly good job of helping us host affairs, going up and introducing themselves, or introducing guests around the room, we make a big effort to say thank you to them, specifically for what they've done. If there was one thing in particular, we'll zero in on that. It's the constant... you know, we care. You're good, you're worth something, and you get a good response from it.

Q: Do you think there is very little opportunity, whether wives are willing to admit it or not, for employment when overseas?

ROWELL: It's a difficult problem. Again, it depends on the post, but in the posts that we've been in, employment is really limited. I'm speaking about employment within the embassy because that's generally where the employment is. Teachers, that's another category. Generally even if they can't get a job when they first arrive they can work into a job of teaching. The same for a nurse, but within the embassy, or within the American school. For other spouses it's just very, very difficult. In La Paz I was asked to attend a meeting of 18 spouses to discuss jobs. What I found out: number one, there was a lot of misunderstanding. They did not realize how supportive at that time my husband was, and I also, of trying to find jobs for spouses. They didn't understand the difficulty of taking a job away from a local employee. Some of them hadn't written their resumes correctly. They'd included everything they'd ever done since they were five, practically, in their resume. You don't do that. They needed help with resume writing. They had not filed their applications

with all of the agencies with whom they should have filed. So a lot of the responsibility lies with the spouse to take the initiative and do the right thing to get what she wants.

But then the expectations are too high. You can't take the expectations of a spouse here in the United States and transfer those to La Paz, Bolivia. And as one woman said to me, she was a doctor, she'd gotten her doctor's degree from the University of Bahia. She wanted $60,000 a year. That's so far out of line with any salary there that it's unrealistic. When she understood that, she began to sit back and to think about what she was going to do. She worked into one [of] the mental health jobs, which was perfect. But the expectations have to be real. It's like trying to fit round pegs into square holes sometimes. It's not easy, it just is not easy.

Q: I'm rather amazed, I must say, that you as the wife of the ambassador would have to point out some of these things that one would have thought rather obvious to anyone going overseas today.

ROWELL: It's amazing how much information they do not have about their post overseas. FLO and CLO do an excellent job, but many of them don't even bother to go in and talk with them. I had the advantage of having been here in Washington for seven years, and working with so many different parts of AAFSW — the Association of American Foreign Service Women — and working at the OBC, and cooperating with FLO, that I know about some of these things. And I had attended the career course at the Overseas Briefing Center, so for me it was information that I had, and simple information. But these spouses didn't have it.

Q: You have spoken about, and this is one of them, problems that people bring with them into the Foreign Service, not always problems that are easy to resolve but perhaps problems that, as a couple, the officer and his wife, had not been either aware of or willing to face. That obviously affects their performance, the officer's performance to some

degree. Have you had an opportunity to help some of the officers and their wives in a very personal sort of way?

ROWELL: Yes. When we were in Lisbon, and Ed was the DCM, we had one couple... he had come into the Foreign Service — they were married, and had been living in the States, and then he entered the Foreign Service. And what we didn't realize is that she brought a lot of unpleasant baggage with her. I happened to meet her at a coffee, because I do make it a point to attend the coffees just so I know who's there, and listen to what's going on — it's amazing what you can pick up. I realized that she was having problems. She didn't live too far from where we were at the time. I asked her if she would like to go out to lunch. We went out to lunch, and I realized that she was drinking at lunch time. She was drinking wine, but she had three or four glasses of wine, and I thought, “Oh my. There may be something here.” So I said, “Let's have lunch next week.” She was having a hard time adjusting. They had no children and I tried to interest her in a couple of things. She went along on some trips and things like that. But I realized after a couple of lunches, that there was something really wrong. It turned out, in fact, that she was an alcoholic, the marriage was on the rocks before they came overseas. It was exacerbated by being there in a strange environment, and that kind of thing. So I mentioned it to my husband who was able to very discreetly mention it to the regional medical officer that we had at the time, and she was quietly evacuated back to the United States, with [the husband's] consent. He knew it, and was very cooperative. They eventually were divorced and he is still doing very well in the Foreign Service. But this happens. The problems are there. They may start at another post. They may start in the United States, and if the couple themselves, the family themselves, don't resolve the problem, or can't resolve the problem and don't want to ask for professional help, [they] very often say, “Oh, it's the Foreign Service. It's because I'm living here and I hate this place.” It's not that they hate the place. They may hate the place, but they hate themselves.

Q: Have you found the Medical Section, whether regional or here in Washington, to be of help when needed... in an effective way?

ROWELL: Yes, yes definitely. From even when we were in Argentina... back to Argentina... Brazil, no. We didn't have it in our consulate. But from Argentina, to Honduras, to Portugal, to Bolivia, back to Portugal, yes. It's been improving. I think they really are doing the best they can, and I feel that the medical examinations that we get in the State Department are very good. I have no complaints about that. We've had no problems, however. People who have serious medical problems overseas, it is difficult. It really is difficult. For example, if you're in Bolivia, certainly in Lisbon now, you need to be evacuated.

How important is the role of the Foreign Service spouse? You've asked me several different ways about the difference a spouse makes accompanying her husband overseas. My husband once commented to me on the many wonderful people he has gotten to know in Portugal because of my relationship with professional women and with wives of prominent Portuguese. And he can know and appreciate the members of his own staff better because having me with him enables us to get together more easily in an informal family setting. If I weren't in Lisbon Ed would not be having wives of significant Portuguese nearly as often to the residence. But those wives and their husbands appreciate the opportunity to come together to the residence. And, let's face it, those wives are closer to their husbands and their husbands' work then any of us will ever be.

We've been talking about problems and concerns, but I don't want to finish only talking about problems.

I'd rather tell you about the way I feel about the more than 30 years I've spent in the Foreign Service.

I feel good about life. I've been involved in all kinds of things from road building to community building. I feel I've made a difference to other human beings and to my own country. I've built friendships that have endured with people in every place we've been posted. I've always been able to find a challenge that was worth meeting.

Like other American women of my generation, I have a marriage that has endured, raised three outstanding children, and, in addition, I've had this wonderfully rewarding Foreign Service career. You know, I really would like to find a way to talk with more Americans across our country so that they can understand and appreciate what the Foreign Service does and feel as proud of it as they do of the flag, the military, or our country.

The Foreign Service presents a rare privilege to serve your country in a meaningful and far-reaching way, an opportunity to share the values we all absorbed as children: volunteering, sharing, and caring about the dignity and welfare of others. What greater mission could we have?

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BIOGRAPHICAL DATA - LE (LENORA WOOD) ROWELL

Spouse: Edward M. Rowell

Spouse Entered Service: 1956Left Service: 1994You Entered Service: 1957Left Service: Same

Status: Spouse of AEP

Posts: 1956-59Recife, Brazil, Vice Consul 1959-61Curitiba, Brazil, Consul, Principal Officer 1961-64Washington, DC, Officer in Charge Honduran Affairs, State/AID 1964-65Palo Alto, CA, Stanford University, Latin America Area Studies 1965-68Buenos Aires, Argentina, Political Officer, Deputy Chief of Section 1968-70Tegucigalpa, Honduras,

Library of Congress

Political Officer, Chief of Section 1970-71Palo Alto, CA, Stanford University, Graduate School of Business Sloan Executive Program 1971-74Washington, DC, FS Inspector 1974Washington, DC, Deputy Director, Office of Iberian Affairs, 1975-77Washington, DC, Deputy Director, Office of West European Affairs 1977-78Washington, DC, Director, Office of West European Affairs 1978-83Lisbon, Portugal, Deputy Chief of Mission 1983-85Washington, DC, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Consular Affairs 1985-88La Paz, Bolivia, Chief of Mission 1988-90Lisbon, Portugal, Chief of Mission 1990-94Luxembourg City, Luxembourg, Chief of Mission

Place and Date (optional) of birth: June 25, 1935; Washington, DC

Maiden Name: Lenora Mary Wood

Parents (Name, Profession):

Newton Oliver Wood, Jr. - Administrator

Wilma Wood Pechacek - Homemaker

Schools (Prep, University):

Woodrow Wilson High School, Washington, DC

Strayer College, Washington, DC

Date and Place of Marriage: August 23, 1957; Washington, DC

Profession: Writer/Lecturer/Curator

Children:

Edward Oliver Rowell “Ted”

Karen Elizabeth Rowell Schuler

Christopher Douglas Rowell

Volunteer/ Paid Positions & Honors:

FOREIGN SERVICE/COMMUNITY ORGANIZER with over 25 years' experience organizing volunteer programs, managing staffs, writing and teaching in the United States and in foreign environments with special emphasis in a cross-cultural context on:

Developing educational programs, especially for children, emphasis oliterature, art, cross-cultural adjustment

— Promoting the arts

— Supporting United States national interests and U.S. Embassy goals in countries of assignment

— Developing and supporting community service organizations

Publications

Living in Portugal, a sociological and cultural guide, Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC, 1980; revised 1983, 1989 "Reading Enrichment Programs", Diario de Noticias, Portugal's newspaper of record, Educational Section, 18 December 1979 Entertaining Ideas, co-authored, Buenos Aires, 1967; revised Washington, DC, 1972 Butcher, Baker, Candlestick Maker, orientation guide to Buenos Aires, co-authored, 1968

Awards and Offices Held

AVIS BOHLEN AWARD, given annually to the Foreign Service family member who has contributed the most to U.S. national interests and cross-cultural communication in a foreign country (for work in Lisbon 1978-83), Washington, DC, 1984

SECRETARY OF STATE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERISM, given annually in recognition of outstanding volunteer service and for personal commitment and compassionate activism in working to enrich the quality of life for others in the community, Washington, DC, 1992

Member, International Advisory Committee, Museum of American Folk Art, New York, 1989-96 Founding member, member of Board, Quipus Foundation (preservation of folk heritage), Bolivia, 1987-present Member, National Council of the Friends of the Kennedy Center, Washington, DC, 1984-85, 1976-78 Member, AFSA/AAFSW Merit Scholarship Awards Panel (American Foreign Service Association/Association of American Foreign Service Women), Washington, DC, 1984 Chairman, Embassy Community Liaison Office Advisory Board, Lisbon, 1980-83 Chairman, AAFSW Nominating Committee, Washington, DC, 1974 Treasurer, AAFSW and BOOKFAIR, Washington, DC, 1972-74 President, Embassy Wives Association, Tegucigalpa, 1969-70 Program Chairman, Vice President and President, U.S. Embassy Wives Association, Buenos Aires, 1966-68

Memberships

Museum of American Folk Art, New York City, 1989-present Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, 1989-92 National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, honorary member, Washington, DC, 1984 Portuguese Council of Dance (UNESCO), founding member, Lisbon, 1983-present Friends of the Sao Carlos Opera, charter member, Lisbon, 1981-83 Friends of the Kennedy Center, Washington, DC, 1972-present Arena Stage Associates, Washington, DC, 1971-present Association of American Foreign Service Women, 1961-present Cleveland Park Congregational UCC Church, Washington, DC, 1949-present

REPRESENTATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Participated as member of Strategic Planning Committee for developing goals and strategies for next decade for American International School-Lisbon, 1988-90

Created and presented reading enrichment programs for elementary school children (grades 1-3) in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 1969-70; Palo Alto, California, 1970-71; Bethesda, Maryland, 1971-76; and Lisbon, Portugal, 1982-83; Luxembourg, 1990-94

Developed and presented seminars on fundamentals of living in foreign environments: for the Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, 1973-75, 1984; and for American University program, Business Council for International Understanding, 1974

Prepared and conducted classes for disadvantaged Honduran young women training to be teachers' aides in rural areas, 1968-70. Founded YWCA residence for women, Curitiba, 1960

Prepared and presented classes on Latin American countries for Washington, DC elementary schools' “Widening Horizons” program, 1972-73

Organized and taught English classes for YWCAs in Brazil, 1958-59, and Argentina, 1967-68; and for foreign children in the Montgomery County School ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) program, 1973-74

PROMOTING THE ARTS

Organized an exhibit on American quilts, prepared the catalogue, La Paz, 1986-87; researched and presented illustrated talks on American quilts to students, museum curators and directors, and the general public, La Paz, 1986-87, Lisbon, 1988-90, Luxembourg, 1990-94, and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 1993; curated quilt exhibitions, La Paz,

1987, Luxembourg, 1992 and 1995; created the International Quilt Guild of Luxembourg, 1993

Recruited, trained and directed several hundred volunteers for the Friends of the Kennedy Center, wrote tour scripts, arranged foreign language tours and tours for schools and civic groups, managed all volunteer support for the year long, IBM-sponsored “American on Stage” 1976 bicentennial exhibit, Washington, DC, 1972-78, 1984

Created and directed the International Year of the Child art program in Lisbon's three English-speaking international schools; winning works were displayed at several schools and U.S. Embassies, 1980

Established support within the international community in Lisbon (private and diplomatic) for Portuguese dance programs, 1980-83

Generated community support for traveling U.S. groups and exhibits, including presentations by the Museum of Modern Art of New York, Buenos Aires, 1967; Lisbon, 1978-83; La Paz, 1988; and J. Seward Johnson sculpture exhibit, Luxembourg, 1991

Set up and conducted tours of Arena Stage, Washington, DC, 1974-78

SUPPORTING U.S. EMBASSY GOALS

Managed U.S. Government representational residences in Brazil, 1959-61; Portugal, 1978-83, 1988-90; Bolivia, 1985-88; Portugal, 1988-90; and Luxembourg, 1990-94; hiring and supervising staffs, managing representational programs, advising on interior decoration, and making arrangements for Congressional and Executive Branch visitors

Planned, set up and guided the U.S. Embassy Community Liaison Office (ECLO), which continues to help U.S. Government families and employees find schools and housing,

provide counseling, and set up other community support services for foreigners living in Lisbon, 1979-83

Created and gave seminars and workshops to U.S. Government and American community families and employees on representation, entertaining, interior design and career orientation for spouses, Lisbon, 1980-83, and La Paz, 1985-88

Represented the U.S. Embassy on the six-person Luso-American Fulbright Commission, Lisbon, 1979-83

Researched and contributed material to the U.S. Embassy orientation manual, “How to Succeed in Lisbon”, 1979-80

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY SERVICES

Initiated and coordinated rural projects for Partners of the Americas and Save the Children, La Paz, 1986-88Coordinated U.S. Embassy and American community contributions to Portugal's Special Olympics programs, 1988

Developed community support and obtained corporate contributions for a senior citizens' and indigents' shelter in Lisbon, 1982-83

Organized a Brownie Troop in Tegucigalpa, 1969-70; and supported Girl Scout activities in Lisbon, 1982-83

Provided volunteer services to American community schools in Tegucigalpa, 1968-70; Lisbon, 1978-83, 1988-90; La Paz, 1985-88; and Luxembourg, 1990-94

Aided model Head Start programs in Mountain View, California, 1970-71; and Bethesda, Maryland, 1971

Developed programs in arts, sports and technical subjects, served on boards of YWCAs in Brazil, 1959-61, and Argentina, 1967-68, and helped found the YWCA in Curitiba, Brazil, 1960-61

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This is February 2001, and I wish to add the following comments to update and finish my oral history to correspond with the time my husband and I actually retired from the Foreign Service in August 1994:

Historical Events

In Buenos Aires I experienced yet another historical event. It was 1966 and I was on my way to the ambassador's residence for an evening program series I had organized for the embassy community. Our next door neighbor, Captain Mueller, was going to show slides and speak about his trips to Antarctica. I was driving to the embassy with three dozen cupcakes in the back seat of my car. I had the radio on and heard the news that a coup had just taken place. General Ongania had thrown out President Illia. All of a sudden cars braked and stopped. Some people got out of their cars to talk. All of the cupcakes in the back seat of my car hit the floor. People got back into their cars and the traffic eventually moved on. I arrived at the residence with damaged cupcakes which I managed to save by respreading the icing. The program went on. And Argentina had just experienced a peaceful coup.

There are two Thanksgiving day events I particularly remember. The first was in Curitiba, Brazil in the early 60's. Three groups of Brazilians and Americans came together to share a traditional Thanksgiving dinner: the consulate, the Bi-national Center, and the Mormon community. The group of Mormons was large, about 130 as I recall, and they were proselytizing throughout this southern part of Brazil. The couple leading the group wanted their young people to come together and experience some feelings of home. So

we organized the Thanksgiving gathering with everyone pitching in. Over the years we celebrated many Thanksgiving dinners with American community groups and other host country groups with ties to the U.S. One of the last and most unusual celebrations was a Thanksgiving style event in Luxembourg in 1992. The popular weekly news magazine REVUE featured a series of national holiday foods. I was asked to host an event in our residence, and I worked with our French chef to prepare a traditional turkey with stuffing, succotash, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, and corn muffins. The chef sampled the dishes and soundly rejected the sweet potatoes. The other participants were Anne Brasseur, the vice mayor of Luxembourg City, Bettina, a well-known artist, and Marie-Jose Jacobs, a Luxembourger who received a phone call at our residence that evening informing her that she had just been chosen as the new minister of agriculture. Well, you can imagine the celebrating. We toasted each course, the appetizers, soup, my main course, and then dessert. The photographs and story in the magazine reached everyone in the country and we had a news scoop to boot.

We met a number of royalty during our foreign service years. In the fall of 1977 during the Carter years, we met the King and Queen of Spain at a reception at the White House and at the Spanish Embassy here in Washington. After their official visit, the King and Queen were going to Colorado skiing. In the 1990s we met Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands at a private family wedding celebration in Luxembourg and Princess Diana at a small reception at the British Embassy in Luxembourg. In 1993, a year before we retired, Ed became the dean of the diplomatic corps in Luxembourg, thus he was included in this small gathering for Princess Diana who came to open a large annual British Trade Fair. Princess Diana's composure, grace and ease impressed me. You just felt comfortable in her presence. The British Ambassador at the time, Michael Packenham, attended the trade fair with the Princess and commented that she had gone around to every participant, and there were over one hundred, and spoke personally with each one. She was an effective and beautiful representative of her country.

Another event we had the privilege of attending, again because Ed was dean of the diplomatic corps, was the first state visit of the new King and Queen of Belgium. In 1993 King Baudouin of Belgium (whose wife was Queen Fabiola) died leaving no children, so the crown passed to his brother, King Albert and his Italian wife, Queen Paola. Both kings are brothers of the Grand Duchess Josephine-Charlotte of Luxembourg. The state dinner was held in the Cercle Municipal on the Place d'Armes in the upstairs hall, an ornate room with columns and beautiful wall mirrors, white walls with gold trim, and huge crystal chandeliers. At the head table we were seated below the salt, meaning in protocol order near the end of the u-shaped table, but ahead of the royal escorts. In fact, it gave us a better view of the royalty and, frankly, just sitting at the head table was an honor. The gowns, the crowns, tiaras and jewels on the ladies; the sashes with decorations on the men; the vermeil candelabra, epergne, and dinner service; the footmen handsomely turned out; the music and French cuisine all came together in one of the most memorable royal evenings. Central casting in Hollywood could not have done it better. The one moment of concern in the whole evening was the response speech by the new King Albert, who was known for being shy and keeping in the background and not feeling comfortable giving any public remarks. There was a rumor that he would not respond. However, he did speak, and even though it was obvious that he was not comfortable, his remarks were well received.

Traumatic Experiences

In either January or February, I don't remember which month, 1966 our family had taken a vacation by train to the Sierra de C#rdoba in northwestern Argentina. It was summer time and we wanted to visit some of the far reaches of this large country. At the hotel we met a young Argentine couple, Eddy and Pilar Mendes. The day before we were to return by train to Buenos Aires, Karen our daughter then five years old complained of pains in her stomach. The pains persisted and our friends, the Mendes, helped us find a doctor in the town of C#rdoba. After blood tests and examination the doctor said that Karen had

appendicitis. Ed called the Argentine airlines and the embassy in Buenos Aires. The doctor packed Karen's stomach with ice. The airline gave her two seats in the plane so she could lie down. In B.A. we were met by an ambulance and a colleague from the political section where Ed worked who drove us directly to the Little Company of Mary Hospital. Karen had her appendix removed. I remember the doctor bringing in her appendix in a bottle to show me that it needed to come out. To be honest, I was in such a state of worry he could have showed me anything. Ted, who was then seven, began throwing up in the hospital room. Ed took Ted and Chris, who was two, home. I stayed in the hospital with Karen. During the night she got out of bed so quickly to go to the bathroom that she fell to the floor from the high bed before I could get to her. Thank heavens she was okay. The next morning the wife of a CIA agent came to the hospital to stay with Karen while I went home to be with Ted and Chris. We did have a good maid, Carolina, who was a great help at home. After this chance meeting in C#rdoba, we became good friends with the Mendes who invited us out to their estancia and introduced us to their friends.

Unusual Perspective

As I look back on my life in the foreign service, especially the last ten years before retirement, I see the meaningful interrelationships between the opportunities offered when one lives in a foreign country and my abiding passion for art and culture in general. I realize the unusual opportunity given to me to represent my country through the visual arts. When Ed was selected for his first ambassadorial post in La Paz, Bolivia, we sat down and talked about the kind of art collection we wanted in the residence. The final collection included paintings, photographs, prints and quilts. I felt strongly about including the quilts, not realizing at the time that they would set me on a course I had not anticipated and launch me in a career which continues today.

Once the whole collection arrived and was mounted in the residence, I began to think about putting together talks on the artists and inviting groups to see and share the collection. It was the reaction of our guests to the quilts that spurred me on. Through the

Art in Embassies program we were able to have on loan six Amish quilts from the Museum of American Folk Art in New York. I had placed two of the more dramatic ones in the entrance hall, and without fail the quilts drew the most attention and glowing comments. I was overwhelmed with questions about the quilts from everyone, including Americans. So I began research on the history of American quilt making at the bi-national center library and got help from the museum in New York.

The second year of our tour, I decided to put together an exhibition of American quilts. Every event I attended for three months I asked anyone who would listen if they had quilts. I came up with eighty-seven pieces from which I selected forty some to exhibit on the ground level of the residence. Even the mayor's wife, Carola MacLean, had three beautiful pieces she had purchased in Texas on one of her trips to the States. We moved out most othe furniture from the first floor, brought down two beds from upstairs, and turned the downstairs rooms into an exhibit space. I received excellent help from USIS to set up frames for hanging some quilts, brought in tables to show how quilts can be used for entertaining, and arranged a spot for quilting demonstrations in one room. June Carmichael, a USIS wife who had professional training in arranging displays, played a major role in setting up the exhibit. Previous to the opening I invited groups of English students from the bi-national center and students from the American International School for tours of the exhibit. The exhibit was open for one weekend to any invited guests. Because of the required tight security everyone had to be pre-listed to enter. The turnout was terrific and the media coverage even better. As a result, I was invited to teach some basic techniques at one of the local elementary schools, quilting classes started with an American teacher, USIS found a small traveling quilt show for the bi-national center, and a small fund was left for a competition to be held each year at the bi-national center. American quilting continues to this day in La Paz.

In Lisbon we featured only quilts on loan from the West Virginia Department of Cultural History and from the Quilters of Virginia, owned and managed by Dolores Bausum. Again we received excellent media coverage in magazines and on television. I was asked to

speak to museum curators and continued to give presentations on the history of American quilt making. What also continued to fascinate me was watching guests in the residence react to the quilts. As they would examine the work and admire the beauty of a piece, they would ask questions like “Is this really done by hand? Do women still do this work today?” I would answer their questions and elaborate on a pattern and its origins, explain the importance of quilting bees in a community, or tell about old quilts that are passed down from one generation to another. I could see visible changes on people's faces as they began to realize that these quilts represented something more than just works of art originally intended as bed covers. They represented family, community, history, talent and creativity, an America softer, gentler, cultured in a way that surprised them and that they could relate to their own lives. In addition to the quilts, we also had two naive paintings by Claire Freeman and a marvelous galleon weather vane in copper and glass loaned by Dr. Robert Bishop, the director of the Museum of American Folk Art. Because Bob could not again loan us quilts, he personally loaned the weather vane from his collection. Bob and the museum could see the value of sharing our folk and craft art around the world. I was asked to join the national advisory committee of the museum, and I have enjoyed my association with these dedicated people.

In Luxembourg our collection consisted of quilts from the Quilters of Virginia, from Mrs. Margaret Cavigga's private collection in Los Angeles, and from our own small collection. We supplemented the quilts with two naive paintings by Earl Cunningham, loaned by Mr. and Mrs. Michael Mennello of Florida, an Independence Day Parade lithograph by Jane Wooster Scott, and silk screen prints by Virginia Knepper-Doyle, a talented artist and foreign service wife. To again introduce quilts to our host country, I invited groups of women to the residence for a tour and my presentation. In 1992 with the help of an American friend in Brussels, Dawn Cameron-Dick, I arranged an exhibition of American traditional quilts at the 12th century castle in Bourglinster, 16 kilometers outside Luxembourg City. Well over 2,000 people came to this remote castle to see the exhibition. The media coverage, especially television thanks to the cultural assistant at the embassy,

Roland Gaul, was excellent. I was interviewed and featured in a very popular weekly magazine, and quilts became the topic of the day. Classes started. A shop opened, and I received calls from unknown women who wanted to share their work or just talk about quilting.

In 1991, at one of my presentations at the residence, the wife of the then Soviet ambassador, Maria Aitmatov, whose husband was Chingiz Aitmatov, the famous writer from Kyrgyzstan, asked if I would give my presentation on the history of American quilts in her country (Kyrgyzstan) and invited me to her residence for tea. I accepted both invitations. However, arrangements for the trip to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, took one and a half years due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the turmoil that entailed, and the difficulty of communications. It all came together in March, 1993. I spent eight of the most exciting days of my life teaching quilt making workshops, speaking about our American quilt tradition with slides and two American quilts as visual aids, visiting with their arts and crafts artists, consulting with the Meerim Foundation about how to go about requesting funds and grants, assisting in English language classes, and being interviewed for the media. As it turned out, I was the guest of the wife of the president of the country, Mairam Akayeva, and stayed in their official guest quarters outside the city of Bishkek. The guest quarters were comfortable: a large bedroom furnished with heavy wooden furniture, a big tile bathroom with an open shower in the corner, lovely views of snow capped mountains, and paths through orchards and gardens. My companions for each day were the driver, Kolya Kurochkin, a driver for the president assigned to Mrs. Akayeva; the personal secretary to Mrs. Akayeva, Gulbara Achakeeva; director of the Meerim Foundation established by the president's wife for education, health and social concerns of women and children, Chinara Imankulova; and an interpreter and assistant to the foreign minister, Zamira Eshmambetova. We became fast friends in spite of the fact I could not speak directly to two of them.

I also met master craftsmen Kenchenbaev Orozobai, maker of the kolmus, a small stringed musical instrument, and his wife who makes felt rugs and beautiful reed mats.

Gulchara Zietalieva was the master rug maker and craftswoman of Kyrgyz traditional clothes. The inside of her modest house in a poor area out of town was a museum full of her work. Turgunbai Sadykov, a famous sculptor, was director of the art college where I spoke and taught. He and Aitmatov received the Lenin Prize, although they do not publicize it.

The remnants of communism were still quite visible. On the trip from the airport in Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, to Bishkek, there were periodic road blocks ofto the side of the road where police could stop you if they wanted to. We stopped once to get gasoline at a pump that looked like it would not work. The driver got some gas and paid a man who appeared, almost from nowhere, from the back of the dilapidated building. Then, as we got closer to Bishkek, I noticed cars pulled up beside gasoline trucks at the side of the road trying to get gas.

The architecture of the public buildings was stark, square and sterile, and in need of repairs. However, the town squares had huge statues of communist figures, a victory monument, and an eternal flame for an unknown soldier. There was one park I walked through that had sculptures by local artists. The markets had little produce. I visited the state store for tourists to buy the cotton and silk material I needed to teach my quilting classes. The quality of the cotton and silk was excellent, which did not surprise me as this area was part of the old silk route. I also bought some souvenirs to bring home. A stop at a pharmacy was depressing. There was very little stock and I purchased one or two rolls of cotton to use as batting for my classes. The cotton was quite crude but served the purpose. Although we had agreed on an honorarium for my lectures and workshops, I had decided that I would donate the money to the Meerim Foundation. When I returned to Luxembourg, I picked up on the momentum of the quilt movement, gathered together founding members, and formally inaugurated the International Quilt Guild of Luxembourg in May, 1993. Luc Frieden, a young lawyer who has a JD (law degree) from Harvard, did

the incorporation legal work pro bono. Luc is now Luxembourg's Minister of Finance and Minister of Budget.

Just before leaving Luxembourg in 1994, I submitted a project to curate another quilt exhibition at Bourglinster Castle as part of Luxembourg's year (1995) as “cultural capital” of the European Union. American quilts were the talk of the town and women of all nationalities were making them. People were beginning to recognize quilts as art. The project, “Quilts — A Cultural Dialogue”, was accepted and I returned to Luxembourg in March 1995 to set up and open the exhibition. The success astounded everyone involved. This time over 5,000 people came from all over Europe. Events at this castle rarely draw even medium-sized crowds for exhibitions. During the quilt exhibition the tavern at the castle had their best year ever. The ministry of culture was delighted with the show and turnout. And the Frenchman who headed the cultural year activities finally came to the exhibition, admitting that he knew nothing about quilts, and left giving us high accolades. Or as I told the ladies involved, we got the Good Housekeeping stamp of approval, a high honor for them.

It is truly exciting to see how our quilt tradition has touched so many people, changed their attitudes about our country, and forged a cross-cultural dialogue. Foreigners, and even Americans, have a different perspective about who we are, what we do, how art and craft fit into everyday life, and how our tradition has impacted and influenced the explosive revival of quiltmaking around the world.

Another perspective that relates to being an ambassador's wife is that sometimes I had to represent my husband at events that he could not attend. In effect I was there to represent the U.S. on official business even though I was not a U.S. official in the strict sense of the word. For example, in Luxembourg I represented Ed at some of the memorial ceremonies for our American soldiers which are scattered throughout the country. These memorials were erected by the Luxembourgers in gratitude for their liberation in World War II. One of

Ed's top objectives was to conduct intensive public diplomacy to preserve these feelings about the United States. It was really important that the U.S. be present at these events.

Cultural Experiences

We had the opportunity to venture out on a number of archeological digs. Two outings were in Honduras where remnants of Mayan utilitarian vessels were discovered. The other trips were in Bolivia on the altiplano where an American archeologist, Alan Kolata from the University of Illinois, headed teams working on digs and on agricultural mounds that showed how the Indians in the Tiwanaku area had irrigated their crops 2000 years ago. The plan was to reconstruct these mounds, which were surrounded by channels for the naturaflow of water, to improve crop production today.

In Portugal I became fascinated with tiles and took courses in tile painting. I now realize this is not an easy art. Just getting the intensity of green you want takes a steady hand and feel for how much of the powder you need. And I wanted to try my hand at making an Arraiolos rug. Although I had done some needlework in the past, I soon realized this was not an easy art. The canvas and wool are coarse and my hands would get sore as the needle worked the counted cross stitch pattern. I decided not to put the traditional fringe on my rug as I could see that it did not last long. A few cleanings with a vacuum cleaner and the fringe begins to pull loose. I have yet to finish the stitched border on my rug!

I want to mention the importance of cultural exchanges like the Fulbright and International Visitor programs and traveling art shows and performing groups. I remember way back in Curitiba in 1961-63, the visits of Phyllis Curtin, the opera singer, and Charlie Byrd, the classical guitarist who returned to the States and together with Stan Getz produced the bossa nova sound still popular today.

In Lisbon in the early 1980's, the visit of the Joyce Trisler Dance Company provided an unusual result. After the performance at the Gulbenkian, the company came to our DCM residence for supper. I had arranged with USIS to get Portugal's well-known classical

guitarist, Carlos Paredes, to play. Carlos did not speak English but that made no difference as the dancers listened and the guitarist played. Sometime later Carlos, who was known to sympathize with the Portuguese communist party, was selected for an International Visitor (IV) grant to the U.S. As it turned out Ed and I were returning to Lisbon via New York and were waiting to board the plane when I spotted Carlos who was also returning to Lisbon. He had just finished his IV grant traveling around the U.S. and was glowing with tales of his visit. His discovery that we had dance companies and symphony orchestras even in small towns in the States surprised him and certainly changed his attitude and impressions of our country. One other American artist that crossed cultural boundaries was Dale Chihuly, the glass artist, teacher and founder of the famous Pilchuck glass school just outside of Seattle, Washington. Dale exhibited his work at the Gulbenkian Museum, gave a lecture there, and visited a glass factory in the north of Portugal to work with the Portuguese glass blowers and an American artist-in-residence at the factory. This was an extraordinary experience for those of us who witnessed the creativity, physical requirements, timing and teamwork necessary to produce works of art such as Dale's. And to see the Portuguese respond to him and he to them was sheer delight.

Unusual or Outstanding Personalities

Although I have met presidents, prime ministers, kings, queens, royalty of all standings, and have special female friends who are outstanding, each in a different way, there is a group owomen I shall always treasure. I do not know their names and they wear no visible crowns. They are the Quechua and Aymara Indian women I met while working with Save the Children in Bolivia. Their stoic acceptance of life and death, the disappointments of promises broken by people of authority, their survival in poverty, and the thread of hope that they constantly spin, gave a sobering balance to my life. In particular, it was the group of Aymara women who had walked barefoot for miles — some for two or three days — over mountain terrain to meet with me and to tell me why it was important for them to have a road into their small villages. After meetings and speeches, we were preparing to leave. I had turned to get into the jeep and I felt a tugging at my sleeve. One of the women stood

by me with a basket she wanted to give me. I saw that there were a few eggs in the basket and immediately realized the value of this gift. That very morning when I was having coffee and bread in the open area of the pension where I was staying, the lady of the house had refused to buy eggs when the seller came to her door because she could not afford them. I instinctively knew I had to accept the basket, but there was that moment of hesitation. So I accepted the basket, hugged the woman and her companions standing around her, and gritted my teeth to hold back the tears. These women had sacrificed hard earnings to say thank you and to let me know they trusted my word that I would help them to get the road built. When I returned to the pension that evening I gave the eggs to my hostess and I kept the basket. Those Indian women will never leave my heart.

Specific Contribution

Two activities followed me through our foreign service years, teaching English and reading to elementary school children in our American schools. In Bolivia (1985-88) I worked with teachers at the Bi-National Center to improve their English pronunciation and introduced arts and crafts activities to stimulate teaching English to beginning students. I also tape recorded poems and simple stories for resource material for different levels.

While I was teaching arts and crafts at the training school for teachers' aides in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, I also worked with these Honduran young women from the rural areas to teach them the value of a book and how reading can stimulate children's imagination and learning. The first lesson was that a book was a valuable possession. The paper should not be used for toilet paper or for burning. Once the aides learned the techniques of how to read a book to a group of children, they could see the delight on the children's faces. It was from this experience that I developed my own program for reading to children in grades K-2 in our American schools overseas and in Palo Alto, California and Bethesda, Maryland when we were posted there.

While we were in Buenos Aires, we did a lot of entertaining. Women in the embassy asked me for recipes and wondered how I was able to give a dinner with relative ease. I had also become good friends with the wife of our consul general. In 1967 Jo Yelton suggested we collaborate on a book for entertaining. We printed the first edition of “Entertaining Ideas” and gave it away. In 1972 we copyrighted the book and began to sell it. Today it is still available and used at the Overseas Briefing Center of the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (formerly the Foreign Service Institute (FSI)) to illustrate easy recipes and simple ways to entertain with and without help.

Lifestyle Comments

I have already talked about moving to places where living was very different from my accustomed life in Washington, DC before I was married. Those experiences have opened my mind and attitude toward people who are different from me. I can manage without air-conditioning or central heating. No telephone or television can be a blessing at times. Erratic electricity supplies can produce some funny and frustrating events. Lack of water and clean water was the most difficult for me. And then there is food. I remember an early experience in Curitiba, Parana, Brazil when Ed, Ted who was a year old, and I were invited by Brazilian friends to their house by the Parnagu# River. I asked what I could bring and was told only bring food for Ted. We reached the house by boat to find there was no refrigeration, no electricity, no communications and no safe way to store perishables. The dinner was applesauce, bread and live oysters which were kept in a basket in the tidal sand. I had never eaten live oysters before. Although I had seen friends in my parents' home eat them before my grandmother could fry them, I was never tempted. I always had them friend with cocktail sauce. That weekend I ate them live for the first time in my life and found them to be okay and not as slimy as the ones I had remembered.

During our thirty-eight years in the Foreign Service, we moved on the average of every two and a half years. Some assignments lasted as long as five years, except for our stretch of eight years in the U.S., and some as short as ten months. And we stretched the definition

of normal tours. For example, after one year in our first post, Recife, Ed received word that he was being appointed as an aide to Clare Boothe Luce who was going through the confirmation process to be ambassador to Brazil. We packed up and moved out of our house and into the house of an American couple with the telephone company who were going home on vacation. Two weeks after we moved in word came that Luce had been confirmed and had resigned the next day. Apparently she had run into conflict with Senator Wayne Morse, proved she could be confirmed and then promptly resigned. So our transfer was canceled and luckily our house had not yet been rented. We moved back in and six months later our transfer to Curitiba came. In Curitiba we were able to move right into the consul's residence. It was a lovely American looking house with no central heating. Some evenings we ate dinner with our coats on. There was no fire place in the dining room. In Buenos Aires we initially moved into a temporary house in the suburbs and then into the rented house we found in Vincente Lopes, a residential area just outside the ring round around the city of Buenos Aires. In Tegucigalpa, we moved from a hotel into a temporary house until we could find a house to rent. So moving even within an assignment became a way of life.

End of comments. Revised by Le Rowell February 2001.

End of interview